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POEMS AND LYRICS



POEMS AND LYRICS

BY

W. J. DAWSON

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POEMS AND LYRICS

THE SOUL'S TRIAL

*WHAT gladder thing than day by day to fashion
The verse that toils towards perfection's goal?
What madder thing than in slow pangs of passion
To drain the secret sweetness of the soul?
What sadder thing than night by night to stumble
Along unrestful ways of rest, and ask
The proud soul, now grown strangely faint and humble,
What guerdon hath it of the day's vain task?*

*For him who strenuous falls in some lost battle
There is the long-desired deep grave of peace.
For him who lives with herding human cattle
There is the blind inglorious gain of ease.
But for the artist neither one nor other,
Nor self-approval, nor man's cheerful praise;
Uncomprehending eyes of friend and brother,
Uncomprehended aims and lonely days,
Till all the vexed infertile toil hath end
In youth misused and age without a friend.*

ODE AT SUNRISE

I

Flow on, thou fountain of ethereal fire,
Till all the vales are full of bubbling light,
And warm with slow-expanded soft desire
The world leans to thee, dewed and flower-bright !
On silent seas ride forth uncharioted
Beneath the banners of invisible winds,
Thou Power, that needest no dawn-trampling steeds,
Nor ownest any hand that guides or binds.
All sadness dies, and death itself is dead,
Cheered each dropped eye and each disconsolate head,
Within the living joy thy presence breeds.

II

Far off the wind-bulged sails along the sea
Lie purple in a purpling atmosphere ;
The pebbles on the marge flare ruddily,
And like still torches distant heights burn clear.
There is no sound in all the empty world
Save the faint sobbing of the Night, who flings
Her hoarded dew-drops from her as she flies.

A solitary bird, on silent wings,
Floats like a feather delicately curled
Above the woods where sleeping ferns are furled,
And violets only watch with wise still eyes.

III

The rain-filled torrents hushed and mellow flow,
The river softly glides and makes no stir ;
The runnels only hurry as they go,
And chatter to the early grasshopper.
Between the osiers comes a little cry
Of unfledged birds that feel the chill of dawn ;
And, motionless, with lifted eager ears,
The hare sits on the green dew-frosted lawn ;
And all the world in languorous ecstasy
Seems fast dissolving into air and sky,
And insubstantial as a dream appears.

IV

Around my feet, like plumes, the sunbeams play,
Imparting motion and desire of flight,
And I could wish that I were free as they,
And strong to travel with the travelling light.
Impracticable seem no more the skies,
Nor leaden and inert this mortal frame,
But something bright, and keen, and measureless,
Fashioned of air, and light, and living flame !
Fain would I plunge with blind and joyous eyes

Into far fountains of the dawn, and rise
Fresh-souled, a winged incarnate Happiness.

V

But ah ! the sun-washed feet are leaden still,
And still the world moves on the same old way !
The shepherd wakes, and on the windy hill
Sheep bleat, and in the valley mists are gray.
From unseen steeples clocks proclaim the hour,
And shrill cries answer from each level mead.
The charm is past ; some signal Dawn hath given,
Whereat the clear-eyed Winds arise and lead
The huddled clouds, obedient to their power,
Along steep paths where grows not any flower,
To far-off pastures of the southern heaven.

VI

O that the world were ever bright and fair !
Forever could I stand on this high plain
And drink long draughts of sunshine and sweet air
And feel my life in every quickened vein.
Fain would I hear the throbbing pipes of Pan,
And follow thro' these flowering woods of May,
And dance unshamed in spring-lit ways of mirth,
The natural child of one unthinking day.
O thou bright Power, who shone ere man began,
Assoil me of the sorrows of a man,
And let me, earth-born, live with this warm earth

THE MAKING OF THE SOUL

I

Now, in this dewy hollow, jonquil-starred,
From rude eyes sheltered, branch and blossom barred,
Where Sound herself has fallen asleep on flowers,
And shod with mosses move the breathless hours,
Let me recapture, while the day's light slopes,
Those Adorations, Presences, and Hopes
That long have led me. With unfettered feet
On upward paths of splendour let me beat,
Like some faint bird, with sun-plumed wings close-furled,
That floats at ease above the rolling world,
Sustained, upheld, propelled at height immense,
By the wind's strong invisible violence.

II

O Lady, take these painful fruits of speech,
By such long labour fashioned each to each,
By such long leaven of the winds and earth
Wrought cell to cell, and brought to tedious birth :
By such faint joys of inward quickening,
By such inclement hours of blossoming,

Since 'twas for thee that all was wrought and done,
And thou wert inward hope and outward sun,
Thou the warm life that lived within my own,
Thine seedlike words wherewith my life was sown,
And thine shall be the praise for which I prayed,
'This undelaying harvest long delayed.

III

Long since in youth three Spirits led my feet
In paths remote from clamorous crowd and street.
The first in storm-frayed thunder-clouds was clad,
With eyes imperious, insolently sad,
Wherein moved violet shadows of the night,
And tempest-flashes, which with arrowy light
Pierced the heart's core, and through each element
Poured the keen flame of torturing discontent.
Within his hand he held instead of sword
An iron harp of strenuous clamant chord,
And on his brow a fiery splendour lit,
Which crown-wise glorified and tortured it.
I heard him sing—no song of fluting bird,
But the loud dissonant eagle-scream I heard,
And through deep vales wild avalanche-thunder hurled,
And melancholy waves rolled round the world.
He startled me and drew me, height by height,
Through realms of passion and disastrous light,
And through my heart rushed like a roaring tide,
Turbid with ferment, Byron's pain and pride.

IV

The second Spirit came when spring was dead,
By Autumn winds, like winged steeds, charioted,
And hair blown back against the flying cloud,
And music shrill, and sweet, and wildly loud.
His full eyes shone with hope of visions immense,
Which no man sees or hath seen ; opulence
Of Life and Love breathed in each eager glance
Which dimmed the sunlight with its dominance.
Faint rainbows clothed him with a vesture bright,
Which altered in each hue of shifting light,
And Fragrances and Odours came with him,
Stol'n from the haunted depths of forests dim,
And immemorial vales, where silent streams
Flow onward dreaming to some land of dreams.
His words fell on the hushed sense like a rain
Of tears begot by some delicious pain,
Or like a music soft and measureless
Which dies of its own keen voluptuousness ;
And flush't cloud-peaks behind him hov'ring hung,
And the sea listened silent while he sung.
I heard and followed, but whene'er I strove
Upon that rainbowed road he kept to move,
In billowing mist were whelmed my heavy feet ;
And whensoe'er that strain I would repeat,
An aching numbness froze my heart with pain,
For Shelley's charmed string who shall touch again ?

V

One other Spirit calm and grave there was,
Who shadow-like stole silent thro' the grass,
Fresh from embraces of the Titan broods,
And nymphs, and fauns, that haunt deep-shadowed woods.
Unnaturally calm he was, as one
Who long since with all earthly love hath done ;
Who holds within himself, as sword in sheath,
Fore-knowledge and fore-taste of languorous death.
A faded chaplet hung about his brow,
Woven of hopes that long had lost their glow ;
His voice was low and sweet, and lingered on
Its utterance like a stream's faint fitful moan.
Yet mellow as the nightingale's it rose
When moonlight filled the wood with silver snows,
And in the shadows many an antique shape
Of god or goddess, with wide eyes agape,
Stole listening forth, and from the woodland dim
Voices of pain and rapture answered him,
Long languorous notes and mellow wind-borne cries,
From wandering, long dis-crowned divinities,
In the bewildered forest sunk from sight ;
And lo, Greece lived again, and all the light
Of all the dawns when earth was fair and young
Spanned wizard skies above me while Keats sung.

VI

Companionless, as some strange flower that dwells
Unnoticed in the forest's deepest dells,
I grew, and breathed a warm enchanted air,
With strength to dream, but none to act or dare.
My food was honey-dew that came unsought,
By many a golden bee of Fancy wrought,
And dropping gold, stol'n from the secret womb
Of azure fields. I broke the honey-comb
And ate unseen, and saw the suns that shone
By long-sealed wells of ancient Helicon :
I drank the magic water and I dreamed,
'Till all the world like some thin vision seemed,
And men's loud-striving voices from afar
Were like the sound of some faint labouring star,
Or as the whisper of a motion heard
From the wide wings of some high-travelling bird.
Gladdened at morn I rose because I knew
A spell which gave each hour a golden hue ;
In cold hours of contempt that secret charm
Kept all the chambers of the spirit warm ;
At night faint purple wings about my bed
Were furled, and I was thrilled and comforted :
And near me unapparent glories moved,
And steeds for flight, fire-maned and fiery-hooved,
And calm, soft-sandalled splendours, who at will
Bore me to realms remote, and fair and still.
I was as one who tastes a sovran wine,

And hears a golden music, line on line,
Throb thro' a lucid sunset-atmosphere,
Until confused became things far and near,
And in the modulated music beat
Melodious marchings of aërial feet,
And all the show of earth and sea and sky
Dissolved in dream, and song, and fantasy;
And Nature, and all visions that are hers,
Were lyric lines within a poet's verse.
Had death come then I had been well content
To leave life's unfamiliar element,
And pass into the veins of trees and flowers,
And move thro' silent zodiacs with the hours,
And share the freedom of the winds and rain,
Dissolved for ever with delicious pain
Into all things that grow, and coming up
Refashioned in the lily's faery cup;
Or, if not thus, on some fair morn to cease,
On sleeping tides drawn on from peace to peace,
Unknown of men to fade away and pass,
Like dew sucked up by sun and wind and grass,
Or bubble sunk within the sunlit sea,
Dissolved and mixed in its immensity.
And so I dwelt a dreamer among men,
Far from all mortal care or human ken,
Content in crowded worlds to live apart
Counting the pulses of my own full heart.

VII

O Lady, thou didst teach me that not thus
Alone shall highest visions visit us ;
Man waits the call of Love, and it was thine
All these far-drifting elements to combine,
And out of dreams and powers past my control
Fashion in me the ordered full-orbed soul.
On my strayed life thou enteredst like a star,
Which moves where woods wide-branched and silent are,
And finds at last a solitary rift
Through which its eddies of faint light may drift,
And, entering, grows until it is a shape
Which sparkling films of wind-blown raiment drape,
And drawing nearer is a creature human,
A Star in brightness, but in brow a Woman.
And thou didst touch me and didst gently lead
By bare blown wold, and vale, and darkened mead,
And cattle huddled in the frozen marsh,
And towns where life is dissonant and harsh,
And huts where obscure mothers lie at rest
With tear-stained children gathered on the breast,
And men with tired hands fall'n slack, and stilled
With sleep, are of their long day's toil fulfilled,
To Bethlehems of world-sweet hope and woe,
Where love's fair blossoms out of sorrow grow,
And Calvaries crowned with divine eclipse,
And Christs who cry thereon with thirsting lips,
And all the great vext ever-vehement strife
Of man's laborious and unpitied life.

VIII

And thou didst teach me how the heart expands
At Love's warm breath, and with thy delicate hands
Thou didst unloose the girdle of my being,
And draw forth, like a bud bright and unseeing,
From sheath and husk the folded self that lay
Concealed, and fearful of the common day.
Beneath the ice you heard the river run,
And drew it, chilled and murmuring, to the sun.
Around my spirit thou didst weave the mesh
Of love-spun sinew and inviolate flesh,
And thus we travelled through a world of blossom,
Lip laid on lip, and bosom leaned on bosom :
Or stooped by wells that stars endiadem,
Like flowers trembling on a common stem,
Each in the other imaged and transfused,
In thee my being mystically confused,
Till I knew not if I were I or thou !
For rather should the sun's flame disavow
Its light, and flame with heat no longer mate,
Than thou and I be ever separate,
Thou Mother of my soul, thou Sister, twin
To every thought that glows or pains within,
Thou nearer and yet dearer than these are,
Thou bright Deliverer, thou impassioned Star,
Thou spring-like creature, fair, and warm, and human,
Thou Star in brightness, but in brow a Woman !

IX

And thou didst teach me that in suffering
Is learned the highest song that man can sing ;
And in drear labour through inglorious years
The truth that takes the world's reluctant ears,
And in the storm of action there is found
The art that triumphs with a sovran sound,
And in dark vales of limitless self-shame
Is plucked at last the fadeless flower of fame,
And last, by Love that suffers and is calm,
The land of peace and ever-flow'ring palm.
O thou, my Star, my Light, my other Soul,
Thus thou didst teach my feet to win the goal ;
Thou Life, thou Love, toward whom my spirit yearns,
Thou Fire, wherein my thought transmuted burns,
Thought of my thought, in whom all visions meet,
Lo ! thus were led my long-bewildered feet,
And now at last the labour is complete.

X

The labour is complete ; let us arise
And seek again youth's morn-enchanted skies.
Melt thou, and be once more my guiding Star,
And I will follow glad, and fleet, and far,
To easeful lands that green and quiet are.
Fairer than were the slopes of Gilead,
Or snow-crowned Hermon, where the land is glad
With fountained gardens, and the dove makes moan
Beside the streams of cedared Lebanon ;

Fairer than are the bright unvintaged lands
O'er which morn-robed Amana silent stands,
And Senir, like a shaggy sentinel,
With purpling heights whereby the hours we tell ;
Fairer than dreamed-of Tempe, or the vale
Where eddying Usk flows thro' the moonlight pale,
And murmurs languorous tales of knightly love
To level meads, and hawthorns stooped above ;
Fairer than flower-fair islands of the sea,
Or all earth's fairest shall this region be,
Where foam-laced waves roll down a golden shore,
And all the earth's vain clamour hurts no more,
But only on the inward ear shall beat,
Like sad far music that the sea makes sweet.
And there, in strains that come we know not whence,
Shall be re-wrought each closed experience,
And from the gateways of the long-shut soul
Life's pageant shall stream forth serene and whole ;
And all past bliss for which we did compete,
In unimagined new joy made complete,
Shall reinterpret all it was to us ;
And faint and sweet o'er ocean's tremulous
Untraversed floor, by great winds borne afar,
Our song shall flood that most unhappy star
We called the earth, and men in distant days
Shall give us love who do not ask for praise.
O thou winged Music, thou veiled Happiness,
Thou Joy in whom all joy is measureless,
Arise, and let us seek, O Soul, my Star,
The easeful lands that green and quiet are !

TRANSMIGRATION

I

FROM time to time there falls a radiance bright
Of reminiscence on the startled mind,
The soul cries, "I have seen this thing before ;"
And voices answer, "Thou hast guessed aright."

Yet even then our wit cannot unwind
The mystery, nor gauge the keen delight :
We break into this brighter consciousness,
And fade and falter, even while we find.

When was it we first stood beside this shore ?
What makes it thus familiar to the sight ?
Through what slow haste of centuries have we come ?
What were we once, lower in life or more ?

This virginal face, so sweet and passionless,
Is less than known, yet more than alien :
O, sure our brows have worn some marriage wreath
Of primal life, in some old Paradise !

Or did I gaze upon her rapt and dumb,
What time she looked with Cleopatra's eyes ?
Or, awed, have I not bowed before the beam
Of those proud brows long since in Ilium ?

I cannot read this riddle, how or when :
It is enough she knows me well beneath
All soil of change, all spite and spleen of death,
She, queen of women, I, her king of men.

Her eyes glow with the light of evening skies,
Long æons drop no shadow on their gleam ;
We meet like phantoms in life's shifting dream,
Too little knowing, yet too sadly wise.

II

This vision haunts my footsteps everywhere ;
Earth whispers like a mother in my ear,
“ Long hast thou left me, but I am the same,
Thou still art strong, and I, am I not fair ?

“ See how on yonder peak the light burns clear,
Look well, till memory gives the clue long hid.”
I look ; 'tis Sinai's jutting brow piled high !
I doubtless saw it when it shook with fear.

From some poor Hebrew's eyes, what time there came
The first roll of God's thunderous chariot wheel,
On the hushed air my soul looked forth and saw
Those tottering crags, like mighty torches, flame.

The worn sarcophagus with carven lid,
The Nile's vast water, or the mummy's brow,
All are familiar. I, beneath the glow
Of such a sun, helped build the Pyramid !

The Nile gleams on me with a friendly eye,
A secret greeting in the air I feel ;
That door's low lintel, ah ! did I not kneel
Behind its shelter, hearing Death pass by ?

I have been many, yet inexorably
In each myself alone : in ages gone
I marched with Xerxes, fell at Marathon,
Saw Carthage burn and Alexander die.

III

Inscrutable, unresting, spreads the sea
Of infinite life, whereon we float like beads
Of fragile foam, whirled in an endless game
Beneath the self-same sky, nor cease to be.

Nothing is new in human thought or deed,
Nothing is old but man ; his thought runs on
A differing music, but the self-same key,
A changeful voice, but uttering changeless need.

The new is but the old with altered name,
The light in life's vast theatre is made
Brighter or dimmer, but through light or shade
The singer and the audience are the same.

I hear the mighty instrument whereon
The fingers of the ages strike deep chords,
But one vast music peals its passion still
Through races living, or through races gone.

In Dante's depth of austere melody
Voices familiar on my spirit smite ;
I heard him pass me, crying to the night,
Long since beneath the olives and clear sky.

I turned me then from faction's clashing swords,
Intent to hear him ; shielded from the chill
Of wintry winds to day I read my fill
Of his stern muse,—and recognise the words !

IV

Thus then with heart serene of death I think :
Too oft upon its sea have I been tossed,
Too oft have dwelt within God's light a while,
To stumble when anew I touch the brink.

Shall voyagers fear the waters often crost ?
With natural sadness, when the hour hath come,
I say farewell,—but in myself I know
That life departed is not being lost !

Shall soldiers falter with an instinct vile,
When God's great message breaks the stagnant life ?
I pass at His command to strife or peace,
But the calm soul upon my lips shall smile !

I know the way, the waters make me room :
I know the stairs that gleam up from the tide ;
Upon the further shore my house is set,
In God's great city, as my house at home.

A sworded Knight I wander to and fro
Upon God's errands which can never cease ;
I ask, nor envy, the fair bower of ease,
Valiant I came and valorous will I go.

And there as here, upon life's hidden side,
All is familiar. God and I have met,
I, unforgotten, even while I forget :
God and the soul of Man alone abide.

BIRD'S SONG AT MORNING

O THOU that cleavest heaven
With such unmastered flight,
To whom the fates have given
For sport the sky's blue height ;
Where cloud with cloud is meeting,
I see thy bright wings beating,
And flashing and retreating
Against the morning light.

No toilsome task thou knowest,
No day with tears begun,
Lighthearted forth thou goest
At morn to meet the sun ;
All day thy song thou triest
From lowest note to highest,
And all unwearied fliest
Until the day be done.

Thou knowst no toil for raiment,
No pain of mocked desire ;
The skies are thy song's payment,
'The sun thy throne of fire.

Thou askest and receivest,
And if perchance thou grieveest,
At will the world thou leavest
On wings that never tire.

Yet we of grosser stature
Have in thy flight a part,
We share thy tameless nature,
We have a nobler art.
When thou art tired returning,
There mount in love and yearning
Toward suns of keener burning,
The winged thoughts of our heart.

Within our souls are folden
The wings thou canst not share,
We see a dawn more golden,
We breathe diviner air :
In sleep when toil is ended,
In prayer with hope attended,
We traverse ways more splendid,
And see a world more fair.

Yet oft, when day is gleaming
On sleepless eyes, we vow
We would exchange our dreaming
To be one hour as thou !
Such discontent we borrow,
That we forget in sorrow
We have the long to-morrow,
Thou only hast the now.

TRIBUTE TO THE PAST

WHAT ancestor in what old Paradise
Saw with swoll'n heart strange rose-dipped dawns arise,
And haunted nights of storm with fearful eyes,
On turbulent seas,
That these things move me to unnatural tears,
With melody and terror fill my ears,
And the tense nerves alternate thrill and freeze ?

Who was he, arrow-pierced with agony,
Who felt the movement of the winds and sky
Pass thro' him like a ceaseless torturing cry,
In infinite moan,
That all earth's cloud-winged brightness should for me
Turn to dire darkness, and so tragic be,
Immitigably dark for me alone ?

Or who was he weighed down with grosser flesh,
Whose spirit, futile-winged within the mesh,
Beat up and down with wounds that bled afresh
In shattering strife,
That I with angry tears should seek in vain
Self-conquest and self-reverence to regain,
And win to song this immelodious life ?

Who was he, covetous of the eagle's wings,
 Who beat large-handed on primeval strings,
 Or, later, stung with hopes and questionings,
 Challenged his doom,
 That in my veins once more the blood contends,
 Until lost in pursuit of visionary ends,
 His woes accumulated on me come ?

Is it some futile blind Mœonides,
 Some shouting Norseman of the Northern seas,
 Some ploughman Byron, impotent to please,
 Incarnated
 Anew in me, whose hands move round my heart,
 Whose salt fires in my essence scorch and smart,
 That I am but the puppet of the dead ?

Ah, ye who tried in vain to sing or soar,
 Pursue me with your lust of deed no more ;
 Annul, O God, who hast no thronged Before,
 These ills of birth !
 Dread ancestors forbear and let me be,
 That I, obscure, may perish silently,
 Swept down with all the dust of all the earth !

TO THE FRIENDLY NIGHT

I

NOT in the dawn but the dark
The heavens lie open and bare
With their cressets of infinite fire.

When we go with brows bent in despair,
With hearts that are sick with desire,
Under the midnight's arc,

Then Heaven's all eyes for us,
And the wonderful moon-crowned clouds
Seem stairs leading up to God !

Then the light, in white-woven shrouds,
Covers up the weariful day,
And makes a peace for us thus :

And the pools of mire where we trod,
Where we slipped in the toil of the way,
Are gemmed and crystalline floors ;

And straight through a thousand doors
The spirits of peace glide down,
• And mingle and mix with our own.

II

This is no work for the sun :
To the happy the day brings joy
On the beating of golden wings ;

And one with eager employ
Hails the light, and another one sings,
And they laugh, when the day is begun.

But night is the time for the sad,
When the plentiful peace of the stars,
Like dew on the weary is shed :

And life, with its fissures and scars,
Its stains and its tombs of the dead,
Its ghosts that are evil or mad,

Is touched with transfiguring grace,
And Silence, soft-footed and bright,
Like a nurse rocks the children to sleep.

III

Wherefore we hail thee, O night,
We who suffer and weep,
We of the sorrowful face :

We, who remember life's sweet
Long draught, and who taste no more
The lust and delight of the earth :

Nor hear the innumerable beat
Of the hours, as they dance along
On the sunbeams' quivering floor :

For whom is finished the song,
And the winepress of joy that we trod,
And the race with the swift and the strong.

We, too feeble to fight,
Too bruised with the scourge and the rod,
Too weary to struggle again :

We, forsaken of men,
We, left alone with God,
Cry "Hail to thee, friendly night !"

Thou settest on us thy mark,
Thou teachest us something higher
Than day with his insolent glare ;

For not in the dawn but the dark
The heavens lie open and bare
With their cressets of infinite fire !

PILATE AT VIENNE

PROCLA, how goes the hour? Yet burns the light,
And outside in the shaken olive trees
The desolate wind makes its perpetual moan.
I cannot sleep; I hear the torrent's roar
Made frightful and immense though troubled dreams;
The lamplight hurts my eyes, all things are wrong;
Procla, hast thou too left me in my need?

Ah! now I see thee,—but thou answerest not;
Ever thou sittest with deep eyes aflame,
And hand upon thy coils of gleaming hair,
And face like marble, with white lips drawn close,
As though some leech of anguish drained them dry!
Procla, put out the light: it hurts my eyes,
I say it hurts my eyes: the curst thick glare
Stifles me, drives sleep hence, flickers and leaps
Just as I doze, so that I start and wake
Thinking the curtains flame,—and only see
Thee, Procla, sitting ghost-like in the glare!

Even now I dreamed of thee and of thy lamp,
An awful dream! O'er many an ice-capped crag,
In the deep chasms of sleep my feet had climbed,
Until at last in a low vale I stopped,—

Like that you know, where pine-trees cling in fear
Upon the cliff's face, and the blackened rocks
Bow themselves to an arch, along whose crown
One little strip of sky runs like a thread
Of crooked blue ; O miles up, miles away !
No sound was there, no bird winged such grim depth,
No wind stirred in the pines ; so close they clung
With bare convulsive roots, twisted in pain,
They frozen seemed with age-long agony.
Then sudden, far away, a spark of light
Kindled and trembled : then I saw thy lamp,
And thee, with eyes which nothing saw, move on,
Ringed with its wavering flame,—and then, ye gods !
Just as I stumbled forward to thy feet
With cry of welcome,—lo, I saw thee stand
And lift thy lamp, and all its light was blood,
And the live flame o'erflowed, one crimson stream,
And wet my ankles, splashed the black rocks red,
Lifted me from my feet, and a great voice
Like thunder cried, “ His blood shall be on us
And on our children ! ” Then I saw thee sink
With wide eyes burning, and I cried and woke !

Procla, for old love's sake wilt thou not speak ?
Dreadful thou sittest, silent evermore,
Thy glance fixed in unalterable dismay,
Thy brows drawn down, thy mouth set fast in pain
And on thy lips, where love sat laughing once,
The blue-white ghastly stillness of the corpse !
Hast thou a memory of the happy day

When first we loved, when first we drank full life,
Draining each other's lips in such rich joy
Of nuptial bliss, we well had been content
If all the wide world in that hour had sunk
Like a mere wreck beneath our feet, and left
Us floating onward, upward, where who knows?—
Strained ever lip to lip in close embrace,
Alone within the naked voids of air,
Or swept like leaves across the Elysian fields !

Ah ! to have died in such a flush of joy,
Pouring life out in one ecstatic hour,
What bliss supreamer have the gods for men ?
But now we two stand close, yet far apart,
As though upon two clouds poised high in heaven,
And when I fain would clasp thee, lo ! the wind
Blows thee away, and at my feet there yawn
Infinite chasms, vast star-crowded void,
Bottomless precipices of the blue thin air —
I cry and shudder, and am left alone !

Let me think how it happened. Well I know
The fates stand near, hiding their strangling cord,
Flashing their welcome steel—there—in the gloom !
Procla, rememberest thou Jerusalem ?
Sun-saturated, many-turreted,
It lay upon that morn ; the moon at full
Had scarce gone down, when with a rush of gold
The day leapt up into the wind-swept heavens,
And thou,—thou wakenedst me with finger lift,

And brows drawn even as now, sick with thy dream,
The night's foreshadowing of the day's mischance.
Then scarce had that passed, when within the streets
There swelled the noise of multitudinous feet,
And those I hated—whom may all gods curse,
The priests—stood howling in the outer court ;
And with them—He—the Man !

Could any tell what doom hid in that scene,
What awful issues those next hours should bear ?
Doubtless in those clear heavens, had one but seen,
The furies hung, their serpent-hair blown loose,
The lightnings knotted in their scorpion whips,
Their torches flaring like a comet's tail,
Their eyes held wide with horror and pale rage—
But who could guess it ? Thou upbraidest me
With eyes like theirs ; but, Procla, think a space,
And pierce into the centre of my soul,
Until thou seest me as I see myself
In this dire light of an accomplished fate.
Now let us put it thus ;—rememberest thou
How once we rode through the Numidian wood,
What time the day's heat slackened, thou and I
Lost in deep thought : when sudden, without sign,
Like a dense curtain dropped on noiseless ropes,
The darkness shut us down, and all the waste
Rang with the lion's roar. Just in advance,
Beyond the foremost guard, I saw thee ride
Alone and careless : then I heard the swish
Of something stealthy moving thro' the dark,

And straight above thee, like green lightning flashed
Two fires,—a lion's eyes ! Thou didst not pause ;
The topaz set within thy naked hair
Gleamed like a star, and gave the beast his mark,
Where he crouched low to leap, unseen of thee ;
When, with a rush, a dozen spears flew up,
And ere thy lips could whiten, at my feet
The brute's great length lay shuddering in quick death.

So close thou rod'st to death, and did not know,
So close draws on the inevitable hour
To all men, when a word's mere loss or gain,
A glance's meaning, the sheer accident
Of nerves that flutter, or are knit like steel
At the mood's beck, seals all life's destiny !
Our voices tremble off beyond the stars,
Our deed stands out irreparably fixed ;
Life's drama finished with a splash of blood,
Or lifted into glory of glad years !

What was my mood that memorable morn ?
First flushed swift anger ; here cried I, breaks out
The ancient trouble ; ever at this time,
When fervour of religion hottest boils,
Come riot and disorder ; stir the mud
Of every plot and in its dangerous ooze,
At deepest bottom, there is hid a priest !
Then mere hot rage passed like a gust of breath
And left an anger calmer and more deep,
When I beheld the man they brought to me,

And looked from them to him. . For there he stood,
Pushed forward in the sun, his turban fall'n,
His head quite bare, his face lift heavenward,
And smiling almost, as a god might smile
Ineffable, invincible, serene,
Even while the fiery vipers drained his heart !
His dark eyes burned within his wasted face
As if with endless sorrow,—on his lips
That strange smile flickered like a ray of gold
Caught in the thick mesh of immense still pain,
And when those eyes met mine, there ran a thrill
Of subtle warmth—shame, worship, sympathy,
I knew not what,—straight through each tingling nerve,
And made my heart leap. O, I knew at once,
Wherever guilt lay, it was not with him.
One's eyes made that clear ; looking from his face
To that grim press of faces, gaunt, gray, false,
That ringed him round as wolves might ring a lamb,
With deep jaws quivering, just before they leap !
'Twixt wolves and lamb stood I, and all my heart
Leapt up that moment in the lamb's defence.

Thou smilest thy cold smile, and by thy look
I know thy inmost thought. Speak out thy soul,
Say it is false ! Recite me all the facts,
How thou didst breathe thy fearful dream aloud,
How he stood silent, how the multitude
Mastered their master with their tyrannous voice,
How I bowed at that cry, yea, bowed and fell !
Do I not know it ? Have I ever slept

These many months, when first of all ill dreams,
Or last, when others like thick mists have boiled
Out of the vales of sleep, there has not run
The well-remembered flash thro' all the brain,
That Jewish sunlight lighting every nook,
Jerusalem, piled high 'gainst morning's blue,
Sun-saturated, many-turreted,
And all my life has leapt to hear the cry
Of the oncoming crowd, and front that face?
Thou canst not make me guiltier than I am,
Thou canst not add to memory's open scroll
One word not there already, bitten in
Beyond effacement with undying fire.
I bow before my fate, acknowledging
I suffer justly, being myself unjust!
Whoso to grasp occasion's glittering prize
Throws right away, throws from him life's true gold,
And gains a handful of bright eggs, which hatched,
Shall be a breed of serpents bringing death;
Canst thou add anything to such a fate?

But there I stop, and, fallen from thy love,
Yet to thy pity make my last appeal.
I stand unkinged, cast down in life's mid-fight;
In this Man, prisoner once—what now who knows?—
My life's fate met me, and thereon I broke,
As full streams break upon the sudden rocks,
And life flew up in spray, and fell in foam,
Confused, dismembered, useless evermore.
But this remains; not altogether base,

Or weak, that dread hour found me. Procla, think !
Was any friend, sharer of thought or bread,
Found with this Jesus on his day of trial ?
Did any say, "*He healed me—this at least
Is mine to do—I witness thus and die !*"
They say he had disciples—where were they ?
That he healed many—what spell held them back,
That thus he came unfriended ? So then I,
Mark this,—I, Pilate, his one friend appear ;
I judged him, yea even thrice, most innocent !
I alone sought to snatch him from his foes,
I witnessed for him when all else were dumb,
I gave my voice against the thunder, I
Alone, of all men, strove at least to save
The Lamb from all the hungry pack, and last
Turned condemnation into sacrifice,
Stood with him, shamed before the mob's wild strength,
Acknowledged impotence by washing hands,
Both of us wronged, he sacrificed for them,
I now for him,—and falling with his fall !

Procla, the day dawns ; all the rain has passed,
And shrill the lark sings in the thick'ning light—
I go beyond the light, beyond the dark !
Life's but a game,—the die thrown ill we lose,
Thrown well we gain,—who knows, the Cæsar's throne ?
My stake is lost, and so I leave the game,
Turn a shade paler maybe as I rise,
And feel a sharp strange tremor as I bow
Toward the veiled fates ; but have at least the strength

To go out by the stern old Roman way.
What thing is this thou sayst?—That He was God !
God judged of me,—God slain—that cannot be !
Yet no more God-like ever God conceived !
Who knows? It may be.—This at least is clear,
Outside the world my spirit shall seek His,
Somewhere in Hades I shall see His face
Make light and seek Him ! Will He not, the Just,
Then, think you, turn, and look as one might look
Upon a shamed half-friend of lowlier rank,
Once, for a night, drawn near by sharp distress,
Famine, or fever, or the field's grim chance,
And smile free welcome, measuring out to me
The strong safe succour I denied to Him ?

AN ELEGY

So thou art dead, in the wide chase of life
Smitten before thy time ! Men hear the news,
And feel a vacant sympathy, and breathe
Thy name a moment ; then the rushing wind
Of undelaying purposes and aims,
Blown upwards partly from dark under-worlds
Of carnal prompting, part blown from above,
Whirls them away, and I am left alone,
Repeating this one phrase, *So Thou art dead !*

To me, my friend, how different the words !
I hear them tolling like a solemn knell
Thrilled through the mist, when late on autumn eves
The leaves drop like extinguished spots of fire
In the wide smoke which drifts along the hills,
Above the ruin of a summer world.
The light burns dim, the mouse runs in the floor,
The silence seems to vibrate on the ear,
And a great dread falls on me, while I sit
Close to thy shrouded feet, and think of thee,
Of what thou wert and what thou art become.

How strange that one brief instant changes all
For thee, for me ! For thee the arrow sped
Beyond all search, for me the murmuring string

Vibrating hollowly to empty air !
All changed as tho' a world were lost, and loosed
The golden girdle binding firmaments
Within the starry limits of God's law.
To-morrow will come sometime : morrows grow
Like flowers ever out of night's deep void,
They bloom and fade, and know not what I know,
That earth is altered, and a power has passed
Out of our vision to some final bourne,
Out of our love to realms love cannot scale.

Yet in this room, close to thy shrouded feet,
Thy soul elate meets mine, and I perceive
That thou wert greater than all things thou didst ;
All things thou didst being but bright sparks struck out
From an interior fount of heavenly fire,
The spiritual self, the very self I loved !
I knew thee that thou wert of those great few
Who ever feel a yearning after God,
An inward need and prompting moving thee
To prayer that feels assurance of its goal—
From earliest childhood thou wert sure of that !
Yet hard it was from year to year to stand
Within the clamourous market-place of life,
And pipe to those who gave thee no regard,
To fashion that for which men had no need,
A music falling on reluctant ears.
And hard within thyself to lock thy gift,
As tho' it were a guilty secret, thou
Meanwhile beneath indifferent, callous eyes

Passing unrecognised, unprized, unknown,
With silence like a garment clothing thee !
And hard to see each shining goal recede,
And summit beyond summit fold themselves
In bastions of inaccessible height,
Alluring and delusive, these still peaks
Of Art lost in unfathomable skies !
And hard to learn how short life is, how long
The way, how poor the scant result,
Wrung from the hostile days, for him who strives
To gain perfection undesired of men.
Yet thou didst not despair ; no langour dulled
The keen upsoaring passion of thy soul ;
Even to the last thou didst toil on, content
If from the height those unheard voices called
In faint star-music, and within thyself
There thrived the growing instinct to obey.

No other like thee have I known, my friend,
So wise, so moderate, yet so finely wrought
To sacred ecstasy, so quickly touched
By all the joy and vastness of the earth.
I think thy soul flowered bravely once a year
With flowering summer ; then the odorous warmth
Of long bee-buzzing noons drew forth thy powers,
And new apparel clothed thee ; and thou seemdst
To share the earth's life and wind's liberty,
Thyself an elemental form, in whom
The elements conspired to work their will.
Nothing escaped thine eye, the osiered pool,

'The red-legged heron in the azured ooze,
'The plover crying to the racing clouds,
'The chattering insect-life within the grass,
'The bubbled stream where fishes stirred and fed,
'The lark that soared against the gusty wind,
Crying shrill exultation to the sun.

For thee no fear lurked in the final thought
Of mouldered flesh, rather the final joy
Of working earth's renewal, thou content
'To lose thyself within the earth's wide life,
Hearing the heart of Nature beat below,
And the thick rush of jostling roots above,
Lifting their folded sweetness to the sun :
And all thou wert of flesh softly transfused,
Merged in the flame-core of the perfect rose,
Or folded in the meek husk of the corn.

And yet, too, thou didst love the City's hum,
Dreaded and loved. The roaring loom of Time
That worked therein appalled yet charmed thine ear,
And drew thee toward the various life of men.
There came the hour when in these clattering streets
Thou movedst, heart-weary. Day by day we saw
Thy foot drag slower on the stony stair,
And in thine eye beheld at intervals
A new thing brood, a silent shadow of fear.
What was it, O my friend, what thought was this
That, slowly-darkening, spread disastrous night
Through the thronged chambers of the spacious mind,
And hung with gloom the windows of the eye ?

Fear was it of this monstrous realm of smoke,
This congregated hungry hurrying life,
This streaming roar of avaricious tides
Beating their human foam on iron shores?
Ah, friend, this City was no place for thee!
Here men's hearts harden into adamant
Or break untimely—there's no middle course!
Here men toil unregarded, die unmissed,
Trodden beneath the sullen ooze, wherein
Flesh buys and sells flesh for a little gold.
For thee the high gods meant another fate,
A meadowed house by quiet waters washed,
A hillside where the rocky brook-bed sang
To listening larch and birch, and, sapphire-clear
Or filmed with purest clouds, the heavens domed
O'er distant crests and crags, where Day and Night
Wrought crimson flowers, golden canopies,
And magic isles of rest along the sky.
There would thy mind have grown in height and calm,
And, at charmed intervals, we toiling men
Had heard thy voice in dropping silver notes
Fall on us from afar, had heard and paused
To gather strength, and with dewed eyes had blessed
The singer who had sped us on our way.

Ah, not for thee calm lawns and fir-plumed hills
And yellow sunsets, and the mellow notes
Of thrushes fluting in high-summered glee.
Nor thine the slowly-grading slope of age,
With purposes arriving one by one

Victorious at their appointed goal :
Nor thine calm hours, like fairest water calm,
In which the lily-thoughts slowly emerged,
Unfolding sunward fronts immaculate :
Thine the flame-fervour of unresting life,
With thoughts struck out like stars from clashing worlds,
And passionate life half-conscious of its doom,
Working its mandate while it was to-day,
Because the night neared when it could not work.
For when we would have stayed thee, thou repliedst
“ Why rest? Eternal days within the grave
There be for rest. Let the flame work its will,
Fanned ever by the increasing wind of God,
So that it purge the dross, and at the last
Nought but the pure gold God accepts be left? ”
So, sitting at thy shrouded feet, I hear
Thy voice still murmur, and I cry “ ’Tis well,
O friend, ’Tis well !—all’s well if God be pleased ! ”

Nor shalt thou know repose in far still lands
Of dreamful ease : repose is not for thee,
But peace is thine henceforth and evermore !
Yea, peace, and stillness, and immobile calm
Are here, and on this hushed and frozen air
Reproaches die, complaints, and even regrets.
For, marking thy dropped lids and quiet brow,
Through all my soul there slowly grows the sense
That no life wholly vain or futile is,
Or thwarted, or deflected from that course
In which the power that framed us bade it move.

When all the discords are resolved at length,
Music there shall be with a noble close ;
Something wrought out of grief that star-like shine
Some pearl of great price fashioned out of pain,
Some gracious end that justifies the mean.
Yea, for the lowliest also this is true,
Even these who neither sing, nor strive, nor shine,
Dull lives which blindly spin on thro' the dark,
As insects in the ooze of tropic seas,
That build their coral graves and die therein ;
For how should God build up His palmy reef
Of purposed progress in the roaring surge,
Where sevenfold winds, inwov'n with triple light,
Make music thro' deep-leaved and fruited trees,
But for these lives that toil unseen and bow
Obedient to God's architect called Death ?

So, farewell, Friend ! Upon thy brow I lay
The Mantuan laurel—laurel this for praise,
Lilies for peace, for thou art now at peace,
And praised in death whom few praised in thy life.
Thou wert of Keats' kindred, Shelley's line,
Fashioned like these of air and eager flame,
Battling like these against pursuing death,
Perishing futile, yet victorious :
So shalt thou, too, be duly crowned at last.
O Spirits twain, who shared melodious life
In immelodious, evil, rancourous days,
Fire-winged and footed, moving angel-wise
Along the roads of unfamiliar worlds,

And caught into the cloud while yet vain men
 Discussed the strange gleam of your flying feet,
 The music of your too-soon silenced lips,
 Take him I sing of to your comradeship,
 And help me, mournful, while I sing his dirge.

Cover his face !

*Let us leave the dead lips lying dumb,
 And remember the power he was,
 Not the shadow that he has become.*

*All flesh is as grass :
 But something remains when all's done,
 The song when the singer is gone,
 His passion, his glory, his grace !*

*Back from the bier !
 Blank nothingness only is there !
 But, listen, the sky is alive
 With music, the sky and the air !*

*In vain doth Death strive
 To silence the sound ; it o'erflows
 The grave's brink, and reaches its close
 As of old, triumphant and clear.*

Cover his face !

*His art has completed its round :
 He had learned all earth had to teach,
 And had pierced to the soul of its sound.*

*A point yet to reach
 Lay beyond, and impatient of age
 He sought it—beyond the lark's cage
 The Heavens' free height and bright space.*

THE EARTH'S VOICE

ACROSS the still far-folding hills I roved,
And through the woods, strewn deep with shattered gold,
Where Autumn seemed to stand, of gods beloved,
Leaning against an oak, with finger cold
Laid on her lips ; the faint sweet air that moved
Was like the rustle of her raiment heard
Within some depth invisible, and clear
There fluttered down the song of one lone bird
Across the ruined woodland, blank and sere,
Singing beside the cradle of the year
The weary world to sleep.

Then in the silence deep
I heard the voice of the old Earth awake,
And the dim Spirit of the world drew nigh,
Filling the solitude with sound, and spake.

What would ye with me ? sighed, or seemed to sigh,
That ancient Voice. Afar I hear the roar
Of great vexed cities, and my dreams wax dark.
Men come not now with joy as heretofore
To press my vintage ; few there be who mark
My shrine upon the mountains ; they who come
Are pale with speed, and stricken by strange care ;

They walk abstracted in some dream of doom,
Or fall, and sleep ; they pass on unaware
When I stretch forth in ancient tenderness
My hands to bless them ; they are faint, distraught,
Weighed on by some consuming vain distress
Old not with years, nor wealth of wisdom sought.

Sometimes beneath my whispering oaks there pass
The immemorial lovers still ; they stand
And pluck in idleness the tufted grass,
Or take the daisy for an omen bland,
And know a Presence with them, Whose bright hand
Unseen is lift to bless them. In that hour
Infinity flows round them, and a power
The heart, but not the mind, doth understand
Floods with a light divine the darkened land.
And still the little children come and fling
The russet leaves in sport, and fill with glee
The quiet haunts where fairies make their ring ;
The wood's true fairies these, I oft-times see
With tired feet troop home on summer nights,
And bless them as they go, when dim and sweet
The woods brood desolate, and I weave the woof
Of the world's slumber, after day's bright heat,
And all the starry height of earth's blue roof
Is full of broken scents and broken lights.

Two passed but yesterday who spake strange speech
About new times, and altered laws, and much
I could not comprehend ; they felt no touch

Of my old magic ; far as sight could reach
There spread the still flame of the reddening beech,
And in the blue hills, like a silver thread
Dropped carelessly, the river's tangled gleam.
But ever, as they walked, each bent his head,
And each seemed lost within some hateful dream.
There have been, who have passed this way before,
With solemn brows and heads bent low in thought,
But well I know they loved me yet the more
Because they seemed to see not, and I wrought
Within their spirits such fine ecstasy
Their life became a song. Such was the man
Who turned from Florence, with slow doubtful feet,
And tearless eyes, and wasted face and wan ;
I touched your Dante, and he sang of me,
And lo, his bitter lips smiled and were sweet !
And he who in the latter days walked free
By stony pass and tarn on English hills,
With brow in contemplation stooped, and ear
Drinking the lark's song, while unconsciously
Wind-voices pierced him, and, as dew distils
In sunlight till its last fine drop hangs clear,
A very diamond, so his thought was shaped
By natural magic into perfect song :
He gave me reverence, and I made him strong.

But these, my latest children, all are blind,
And deaf, and dumb, and maimed or dwarfed in heart !
Children I bear, but of distorted mind
Who do not know their Mother ; they depart

And hear not when I call : they stand behind,
And mock with foolish mouths when I prepare
The spells which all my wisest sought to know ;
They have no joy in me that I am fair,
They make my thresholds filthy, stooping low
To search the slime for glittering bits of gold ;
And oft within my heart great anger burns,
And were it not the idiot from of old
Hath ever been held sacred, I would rise
And smite these insolent, whose folly spurns
The Mother, in whose love wise men are wise !

Ah ! blind and stubborn, am I then less fair
Than in old days, or is the loathsome stench
Of cities so much better than the air
Which the sun quickens, and the odours drench
With life and sweetness in far glades withdrawn,
Where the leaves wake, and whisper in their sleep,
And all the bright clouds pass with news of dawn ?
Is the dulled gold you gather fairer then,
Or sweeter city streets, and that hoarse, deep,
Incessant roar of vexed and wasted men
Wherein you struggle, than the peace I keep
In my still temples, and the wealth I hoard
In secret places, strewn with golden light,
Where the birds sing and all the earth is floored
With yellow daffodils, inwoven bright
With dew-washed sunbeams, where all living things
Toil not, nor spin, and yet are clothed and decked
With raiment finer than the robes of kings ?

But ye know nothing, dull-brained and stiff-necked,
Callous of heart, and glorying in your shame ;
But ye know nothing, ye despise my name !
Too well I know ye have no ear to hear,
Nor soul to know, nor lips to sing or smile ;
Ye stand within the shadow of base fear,
And feed upon vile hopes, for ye are vile,
And pure things know not, having eyes made dull
With lust's thick wine, and heart with avarice full !
Wherefore I wait, and time there yet shall come
When each shall slay the other ; this your fate
That life grown viler breeds its own vile doom,
And Death and I at last shall hold calm state
In peace immense, divine, inviolate !
O slow of heart what of the man remains
When calm of soul is lost ? Man is his mind :
But if the man know only sordid pains,
If he seek only what 'twere shame to find,
Then in him dies the one man worthy life.
What is he but a beast, a thing of naught,
Unclean in passion, ignoble in strife,
But for an aim of higher mischief wrought ?
What boots his gain of strength, or wealth, or speed,
If all he win be hours of stagnant ease,
If in him perish sense of higher need,
And he reject the things that are his peace ?

Wherefore I wait, for Death and I remain,
But all else passes ; and we two sweet balm
Shall pour into the earth's wide wounds of pain,

And bring again the ancient joy and calm.
O pass swift centuries, till there shall rise
Out of thy ageless light new hope, and then
New shapes of life, and in some paradise,
At last, new fathers of diviner men !

THE BARREN HOME

O LET me see her once before I die,
O let me tread the English earth once more,
And watch the tossing elms, the rooks tossed high
Against the driving clouds, and hear the roar
Of the sea's numerous thunder ; let me see
The steep red gables burn among the trees,
Like homely beacons to home-loving men,
And taste the freshness of the soft west breeze,
And see her face, and hear her voice again !

O let me see her once before I die !
For here the salt marsh steams, the hours go by
With leaden feet, the dungeon walls are high
And no sound breaks the deadness of the air,
The dumbness of this aching life in death.
The sun stares with insufferable glare,
The sultry dreamful nights breathe heavy breath ;
No sound, no change, save the despairing cry
O let me see her once before I die !

At last the prison doors are open wide,
A secret sail glides on the twilit tide,

An anchor heaves, a mighty wind has risen,
And all the green-lit splendour of the sea
Flashes exultant on the captive's vision,
And rolls between him and his ancient prison.
Who counts past years if he at last shall be
In some still haven of the heart's desire ?
Bright is the water, green is every tree,
Tipped with the fair spring morning's tender fire ;
The white clouds move along the windy sky
With conscious freedom, and his voice thrills higher,
In keener passion, as he nearer comes
To groves where love and memory have their homes,
O let me see her once before I die !

He pauses with a pulse grown tremulous,
He looks, he trembles. Is this then the place
His dreams arrayed in unapparent glories ?
O scarcely thus the meeting, scarcely thus
The dream he followed when in headlong race
The ship plunged past surf-whitened promontories,
And scarcely thus her smile, her voice, her face !
Lo ! all is changed, and she changed most of all :
The skein of love, from listless hands let fall,
Lies all unravelled, and she seeks in vain
The art to knit its golden threads again.
Her voice sounds strange, and far, and unaware ;
She is to him a hollow shape of air,
A ghost of friendship lost, indifferent now
To any heat of human love, unmoved,
Unthawed, and half-afraid before love's glow,

As though her lips had never kissed and loved.
Then bowed the man with pulse more tremulous,
And cried in anguish, "Dear God, pity us !
I asked to see her—lo, I see too well !
I asked for heaven, and Thou hast given me hell !
My dream is over, let my end be nigh :
Lo, I have seen her ; now, Lord, let me die ! "

ADAM LUX TO CHARLOTTE CORDAY

RED is the garb thou wearest, red is the deed thou hast
done,

And red on a land of blood rises the morning sun.

Kings have ridden this road, conquerors mailed in gold,
But none in such red triumph as this that we behold.

Rose, thro' a rose-red dawn, go to thy valourous fate,
Queen of all roses thou, splendid and passionate.

And lo ! at thy feet I fling, here, in the gallows-cart,
Passionate even as thine, the rose-flower of my heart.

Turn but a moment toward me, stoop in thy raiment red,
I answer thee look for look, I am warmed and comforted.

Twins are we of one womb, fated sister and brother,
Nursed on the bare bruised breasts of Freedom our great
Mother !

Thou, whom none could master, proud and glorious head,
Come, O Rose, to my bosom, come when thou art dead !

They have shorn the beautiful hair, they have bound the
strong fair hands,

Signal me with your eyes that love still understands !

Signal, and I will follow : I dwell where thou must dwell,
I shall know thy blood-red raiment either in heaven or
hell !

Lo ! at thy feet I fling, here, in the gallows-cart,
Passionate even as thine, the red rose of my heart !

THE PATRIOT'S RIDE

WE have struck the brave stroke—'tis enough
Does any regret it ? Not I.
The weapons of freedom are rough,
But its glory will come by and by.

Let us ride, while the moon has not risen,
By the way of the moor and the wave :
To-morrow we sleep in a prison,
A week hence we sleep in the grave.

There are hearts that will leap when they hear
They'll deem not the weapons too rough,
There are tyrants who'll tremble and fear,
They'll tremble, and that is enough.

Let us ride : not again on the earth
Shall we taste the salt breath of the sea,
Let us ride in a rapture of mirth,
For at last there's one city is free !

An infinite clapping of hands
I hear through the dawn, and behold
At the place where the black gallows stands,
The day breaks in crimson and gold.

We have struck for the poor and the weak,
Who says that the blow was not just ?
Hope like a bright flower shall break
From the blood-stains that redden the dust.

When God made no sign, and the woe
Of His people was direful to bear,
We took up His task : He will know
That faith wrought the blow of despair !

Let us ride, let us ride far and fleet,
There's a fierce new music of hope
That rings in the galloping feet,
And echoes from valley and slope.

We have done the brave deed : 'tis enough !
Does any regret it ? Not I.
The weapons of Freedom are rough,
But its glory will come by and by.

THE DAY AFTER TO-MORROW

THE fog's on the world to day,
It will be on the world to-morrow ;
Not all the strength of the sun
Can drive his bright spears thorough.

Yesterday and to-day
Have been heavy with labour and sorrow ;
I should faint if I did not see
The day that is after to-morrow.

Hope in the world there is none,
Nor from yesterday can I borrow,
But I think that I feel the wind
Of the dawn that comes after to-morrow.

The cause of the peoples I serve
To-day in impatience and sorrow
Once more is defeated—and yet
'Twill be won—the day after to-morrow.

And for me, with spirit elate
The mire and the fog I press thorough
For Heaven shines under the cloud
Of the day that is after to-morrow.

FAIR ROSAMOND

“ I WOULD the day were done,” she said,
 “ So weary is the day ;
The misty rain doth fall and fall
 Albeit the year’s at May,
And underneath my heart there moves
 The worm of pain alway.

“ Aloof, alone, I sit as one
 Shut in some weed-sealed shell
That lies upon deep ocean floors
 At depth unfathomable,
And all around I hear the pulse
 Of waters sink and swell.

“ Aloof, alone, in the world’s heart,
 Far from the earth’s steep rim
I sit, and now the very sun
 Shines on me dwarfed and dim,
And every thought runs to one thought
 And all thought is of *him*.

“ Upon the lute I play his songs,
But weep, so that I tire :
The daisy’s fringe I pluck, and bare
Its heart of golden fire :
He cometh not : He comes, I cry,
But still he comes not nigher.

“ God keep him, whereso’er he be,
And whom He loves is kept ;
For me all days until he come
Are dreams, and if I slept
The pain and dream would still run on ! ”
She bowed her head and wept.

Far off the dove made moan among
The green depths of the wood ;
The careless sparrows chattered loud
As though they understood,
And mocked among themselves, the weight
Of her near motherhood.

Her eyes were like clear lakes wherein
The dawn lies, and her face
Was lifted, like the face of one
Who prays within her place,
And listens for the wingèd feet
Of angels bearing grace.

“ O lonely is the unbeloved,
 But still more lone,” saith she,
“ Her heart within its silken gown
 That aches so wearily,
Because instead of Hope she hath
 But this—Hope’s memory.

“ Ah me, to bear the child’s sweet life
 And yet to dwell alone ;
No voice within the dripping wood
 That is not voice of moan,
No voice so clear that it shall reach
 The King’s ear on his throne.

“ The apple-tree bursts into bloom,
 The primrose fires the lawn,
The blue-bells, like an azure sea,
 Toss in deep dells withdrawn,
The world hath wakened from her sleep
 And kissed the fair May-dawn.

“ But round me like a winding snake,
 In folds of deathly green,
The wall of yew is built so high
 No summer burns between :
New summers shine beyond, but here
 The summer that hath been.

“ Like one who on the judgment-dawn
Hears not God’s trumpets blow,
For, straining o’er God’s wall, he sees
The world he used to know,
Like a great ship that burns at sea,
Drift past him, moving slow :

“ So, when stars kindle, I lean out
Athwart my prison-bars ;
I hear not God, nor thunder roll
Of His great judgment-cars :
It is my old glad world I watch
Drop, darkened, thro’ the stars.

“ The vision glimmers far and faint :
The narrow gabled street,
The crowd that cries, the King that comes,
The ring of mailed feet,
The King’s face slowly turned on mine,
The vision is complete.

“ For like a sun the King’s face turned
And drank the soul of mine ;
As from the lily’s cup the sun
Sucks up the virgin wine :
I felt my soul go forth to him,
I saw its swift wings shine.

“ If God looked forth at all between
 The angry cherubim,
If God looked forth and frowned, what time
 The fields of heaven grew dim,
Mine be the blame, if there were blame,
 But God will pardon him.

“ I loved as flowers love a star,
 Or moths that love the flame ;
I set my face to meet his eyes
 Without one thought of shame ;
I only wished to die within
 His light : this was my blame.

“ Whose hand shall bind the lover's feet
 To hold them back from flight,
When, in the deep new dawn, strange steps
 Draw near amid strange light,
And the Beloved's cry is heard
 Out of the dying night ?

“ The voice of my Beloved cried,
 ‘ Arise, the dawn is fair !
My hand is on the latch, the dew
 Of night is on my hair,
Unto love's vineyards let us go '—
 I went to meet him there.

“ I cared not how my life was poured
 So it did sweeten his :
No long-debating fear I knew,
 Nor had one thought amiss,
For all thought died between our lips
 In love’s divine first kiss.

“ O King, my King, for love of thee
 My life wastes down to death !
Within this well o’ the world I sit,
 Where life is one hushed breath ;
I cry for feet that never come,
 And no voice answereth ! ”

* * * *

In Woodstock tower the *Angelus*
 Rang out the eventide :
The wind had dropped, and not a leaf
 Moved in the forest wide :
A wan, low glare thro’ the thick trees
 Showed where the day had died.

She stood within her bower-door
 With folded hands and prayed :
Out of her hair a subtle light
 Like to a crown was rayed,
And the roses of her bower bent down
 And heard the words she said

“God keep him whereso’er he be,
And whom God loves is kept ;
But I will watch and wait for him
(For it was while they slept
The Bridegroom came, the Gospel saith).”
She bowed her head and wept.

“And God shall grant my prayer,” she said,
“For God the Son shall cleanse
The lips that pray, and His soul knew
The love and pain of men’s :
Yea, Christ shall grant my prayer,” she said
“For He heard Magdalen’s.”

She stops : a foot sounds thro’ the wood,
Far off the doves complain.
The owl hoots loud, the leaves bend down
And shiver in the rain :
The foe frowns at the bower-door,
And that night she was slain !

THE NATURE HERMIT

THERE is a spot roofed with blue solitude,
Where many a pine-tree hoar, like a brown column
Springs from the turf, and all the turf is strewed
With violets and lilies like a woof
Of beauty and of softness, woven for
The dance of spirits, when most fair and solemn
The light falls broken from the cloudless roof,
And sheds itself upon the odorous floor ;
There is a spot, where, close beside a pool,
Fringed with wild grasses, where the spider hides
And spins unvest his noiseless silken spool,
And the high swallow like a shadow slides
Across the tree-tops and the water's face,
Where ancient Silence sits and dreams her dream.

No motion fills the solitary place,
Nor sound, nor life, save an invisible stream
Which like a pulse beats underneath the grass,
Winding a secret course ; the long days pass,
The horned moon like a silver boat sails high,
And hangs entangled in the pine-wood's maze ;
The stars bloom forth and darken in the sky,

Nipt by the wind of morn : the dawn's clear rays
Burn through the eastern ramparts of the woods
With unconsuming splendour, and the moods
Of the world wax and change,—yet motionless,
Remote, like one who bows beneath the weight
Of an immeasurable consciousness
Of thought or sorrow, ancient Silence broods,
Caught fast within the iron web of fate.

Her form is insubstantial as the air,
The shadow of God, and His infinity :
Her brow is large with dreams, and graven there
Are furrows drifted deep with memory,
And hope, and vision, and purposes sublime ;
Her eyes loom like far smouldering fires beneath
The deep brows rusted with the rains of time,
And the hushed palpitation of her breath
Stirs the wide forest like a wandering wind.
One knee is gathered in her mighty hands,
Whereon the brow, with its great weight of mind
Made heavy, rests ; within her robes the sands
Blown from Egyptian deserts long ago,
What time beside the finished pyramid
She stood, lie undisturbed ; her lips are hid,
But purer far than marble there doth show
Her chin, half shadowed by her heavy hair.
Around her feet the wild flowers mix and grow
And dumb things breed and gambol unaware,
And all her raiment, spun upon the looms
Of the most ancient gods, whose hyaline floors

Hang ruined in the heavens, roofless, bare
To the winds' fury and the tempest-glooms,
And storm-clouds, drifted through the broken doors—
All her bright raiment dipped in wells of light,
And woven of sunbeams, like a floating mist
Floats round her feet, and the wild grasses weave
Their tangled ribbons in its texture bright,
And bright-eyed lizards the green shadows leave,
And sport within the folded amethyst.

O mother of all births and motions, hear,
Twin-sister thou of Peace and Solitude !
Hear, while the day breaks, and while yet the clear
Call of the mother-thrush thrills the deep wood,
And like the smile of God, the sacred light,
Bathes the round world ; I stand and call on thee !
Blind impulses there be which stir the blood
As though God's fingers pressed upon the tight
Tense strings of being, and there came to be
A truer music rolling through the soul.
Towards Him I yearn. O Silence, thou who art
His first-born daughter, help me towards my goal !
Lay cool strong fingers on my breaking heart,
Of thy dear charity set free my soul !

I see far off the strong hills prop the slope
Of heaven's blue splendour ; on the utmost brim
The light boils like a surf, and then is hurled
In cataracts down the steep sides of the world,
And springs in eddies backward to heaven's cope,
Rebounding like a wave against the rim

Of ageless rocks set fast in ocean's tide.
O mother, in those azure roadways wide,
Tell me, what path of paths shall lead to Him?

At no star will I pause ; I will not grasp
The shadow while the substance waits my touch ;
I push on till I press the golden hasp
Upon His doorway, yea, His secret house,
Whose beams are laid upon the thunder's flood,
And fastened with thick lightnings. Over-much
I dare? So far I trespass, that at last I rouse
His anger? Nay,—hath He not understood
The yearning of love's hope? No lesser gain
Than this contents me. Mother, ease my pain,
Touch with thine all-enfranchising caress,
Draw forth my spirit, for I mean no less
Than this, that whatsoever path be trod,
I will push on, and on, and get to God!

Ah, thou awakest ! Slow thy heavy brow
Is lifted, and thy face,—thy face fronts mine !
Thy solemn eyes shed darkness on the air,
A new strange atmosphere begins to grow
About me ; all the heaven lies clear and bare,
But earth seems swooning ! Is this then the wine
Of death I drink, which stings each higher sense
To keener joy, and dulls each grosser need ?
Where art thou, mother? Something near indeed,
An awful presence, come I know not whence,

Is clasping me, and folds my very soul !
Nothing I see but thy deep eyes which drink
My inmost essence, and I feel thy lips
Near mine ! Ah, now the light breaks from eclipse,
Billow on billow the vast splendours roll
Intense, and in the wells of darkness sink !

The flame sucks forth my soul, my body slips
Like a soiled vesture from me ; higher, higher,
I climb the flaming ridges of this fire !
Like a small feather by a mighty wind
Borne through strange places, so the living force
Of an invisible Power—before, behind,
Girds me, and sweeps me on an endless course,
Compasses all my weakness with its might,
Lifts me and sways me, till made fair and fleet
With strength and splendour, on these waves of light
Securely move my winged and flame-shod feet !
O mother, where art thou ? Higher and higher,
I climb towards God, nor faint, nor fall, nor tire !
Alas ! speed fails me ; heart and soul and brain
Are swallowed up in this delicious pain,
I faint for joy : I triumph, I expire !

THE WIND'S DAUGHTER

I AM the Spirit of earth and air,
My sire the Light, my mother the Wind ;
I dwell in the heart of the world and there
My magic I fashion and unbind.
My garments are woven of golden mist,
My hair is bound with a rainbow beam,
And for ornament upon my wrist
The knotted lightnings quiver and gleam.
I travel the pathless fields of space,
I am here, and there, and everywhere,
With the sun and the wind I love to race,
For I am the Spirit of earth and air.

I hold in my hand the seed of stars
And sow the barren wastes as I go ;
As far as the Heaven's crystal bars
The seed that shall grow to worlds I sow.
I hide myself in the setting sun,
And bathe in his splendour unconsumed,
And I love to traverse when day's begun
The yellow meadows with flowers perfumed.

And through the cloven valleys of cloud
I hunt the Thunder into his lair,
And hold in my hand, while I shout aloud,
The lightning stream of his bright fierce hair.

I ride in the wake of the waves that break
In snow at the sides of the flying ships,
And the Tritons blow their horns and speak
My mirth in the mirth of their golden lips.
I sit on the cope of the storm-cloud dark
When it spreads its wings over land and sea,
And across the world, like a labouring ark,
It carries in triumph the Rain and me !
And in the stillness of summer weather,
All night through blue vast gulfs profound
The moon and I go forth together,
And sail in silence the wide world round.

My face is seen in the dazzling sheen
And pools of the tumbling waterfall ;
I love to rest where the grass grows green
Under the pine-trees hoar and tall.
My voice is heard in the song of the bird
And the thunder of seas upon the shore,
The storm, like a harper cloaked and furred
In clouds, makes music my march before :
Till high in the heavens the calm stars listen,
And brighten with delicate delight,
And the Wind and I behold them glisten
Like silver fruit on the boughs of night.

There is no place where I am not found,
No joy of the earth that I do not share,
No dawn nor night, no shadow nor sound,
No depth nor height that I make not fair.

I flash on the grey still pools of water,
I cover the sea with jewels of light,

For I am the Light's own living daughter,
Born in the joy of a summer night.
I dream of neither before nor after,

What the day hath lost or the morrow may find,
I am the spirit of Joy and Laughter

My sire the Light, my mother the Wind !

LINES WRITTEN IN DELIRIUM

I HAVE been sick, I cannot tell
Even now if I am ill or well.
I may be dead, I do not know,
So weak I lie, so faint, so low !
I seem to smell a graveyard smell,
A bitter taste is in my mouth,
My tongue is parched with feverish drouth,
My eyes are shut, and for the gift
Of worlds their lids I cannot lift.
I cannot even weep, so dry
Beneath their lids my eyeballs lie ;
My limbs lie straight, I feel my head
Is bandaged, and I cannot move
My hand or foot for wealth or love.
Perhaps my eyes are even now
The holes where churchyard roses grow,
And this dull pain that in them shoots
Is but the spreading of rose-roots.
Rose-roots ! I will not grudge them room,
Perchance when they have pierced this gloom

And reached the light, through their bright eyes
I may once more behold the skies.

And yet, if I am dead, how's this?
The facecloth from my face I miss,
And on my brow I seem to feel
A light, a waft of breathing steal!
Perhaps I lie in Charon's boat,
Upon the Stygian tide afloat,
And death's warm wind upon me fell,
Blown from the fields of asphodel!
But no, that's all a myth, and I
Doubtless in English grave-mould lie;
This smell of flowers no doubt must be
The rotting wreaths that cover me.
I wonder how long I've been here,
Is it a day, a month, a year?
I know the vault, or used to know,
Close by the chancel, where the glow
Of sunshine lay all day; it was
A flower-oasis in the grass.
My mother, she was buried there,
My father, my two babies fair.
It's a strange feeling—I suppose
I lie with them, but yet who knows?
We're all dead now, and there's no fear
Of taint from one another here.
I would so like to kiss again
My mother's lips: but this is vain!

I am so tired of lying dumb,
I wish the Judgment Day would come !

And yet how sweet it is to know
A man is quiet here below.
No business, bank, or mart to seek,
Only to be quite still and meek ;
To let the world fulfil its year
Without one thrill of hope or fear,
Indifferent, motionless, at ease,
No aim to seek, no hope to please,
No time to count by, no new day
To mark another passed away.

What faint sensations are there still ?
Well, once or twice there seemed to thrill
A nameless tremor round my head,
A sound subdued, yet not of dread,
The earth's own movement safe and deep,
A cradle rocking me to sleep.
And I can hear a curious sound
Of moving things that move around :
Small raindrops trickling slowly down,
Whereby earth's weather may be known ;
Soft worms that wind a tedious way,
Small engineers in graveyard clay ;
And sometimes, just above my brow,
I seem to hear the daisies grow,
And through their roots vibrating clear
The lark's shrill singing I can hear,

And underneath, with lulling sweet,
 The muffled heart of Nature beat,
 Like the long surge that slowly falls
 Monotonous on ocean's walls,
 Or like the mother's breath, the child
 Hears, lying on her bosom mild.
 I wish I were asleep ! but this
 Is just the bitter in my bliss ;
 My brain is bright as fire, so bright
 Sometimes the grave seems all alight ;
 I am so tired of lying dumb
 I wish the Judgment Day would come !

I think I dream sometimes, such strange
 Shapes move around in endless change.
 A little while ago, to wit,
 I seemed to see a narrow slit
 Which led to daylight, and afar
 A strip of sky and one still star.
 And then I heard two voices speak.
 One said, " He has been dead a week,
 When he's been dead a year, you know
 She's sure to marry. Long ago
He wanted her." The other said,
 " For shame ! and he but seven days dead ! "
 And then I heard small hurrying feet,
 And heard a little voice say sweet,
 " You know he is not really dead,
 I saw him lying on the bed

With lovely flowers,—fast asleep !
I went as near as I could creep,
And called him, then I was afraid,
And ran away again and played.
I went out quietly for fear
That I should waken father dear,
And make him cross with me, you know,
When his poor head was aching so !
But I don't think he's dead, do you ? ”
“ No,” said the other, “ it's not true ;
To be made well he's gone away,
And will come home again some day.
Nurse told me that, and do you know
(Now don't you tell) I saw him go !
Such funny carriages, all black,
With people standing at the back,
And horses, too, all black, with things
Upon their heads that shook like wings.
And such a box ! So long and bright,
And big, with flowers covered quite.
And handles round it all in rows—
That was the luggage, I suppose !
O look ! there is a butterfly
With wings quite blue, just like the sky,
He must have touched it with his wings
In one of his chance flutterings.”
Away they ran : I heard them shout
With laughter,—then the light died out,
And on my soul fell doubled gloom ;
I think I wept within my tomb !

I heard what those small children said,
 And thought how ill 'twas to be dead !
 As if to kiss them my dry lips
 I shaped, then thought of death's eclipse.
 No doubt my eyes have fallen in,
 My face is foul from brow to chin,
 I am become so base a thing,
 A shape of shame and shuddering ;
 And this I cannot alter, though
 My thought runs nimbly to and fro,
 And love and tenderness remain,
 Untouched by death, unquenched by pain.

"The earthen vessel perisheth,
 The spirit lives," some prophet saith.
 And here then is the wrong of wrongs
 Which unto human death belongs,
 That I am bound in cerements foul
 Who yet am left a living soul ;
 My spirit eager as of old,
 My body shrunk, and foul, and cold,
 My purpose strong, my will unspent,
 But cut off from accomplishment ;
 In fact, though dead, I must avow,
 Never more full of life than now !

Well, let me sleep, it is not wise
 Too much to question or surmise.
 Dear children, not too far away
 Run in your laughter-loving play !

Sometimes at least a daisy gather
From this green mould, and if your father
Has no lips left wherewith to kiss,
The daisies shall be lips of his,
And hidden in their heart of gold
His heart shall meet you as of old.

Ah me, young limbs that bound and run
And mine so straight with journey done !
I am so tired of lying dumb,
I wish the Judgment Day would come !

IN SIGHT OF GREECE

I

THROUGH these fair isles where Sappho sung
At last I move. How far away
The world where I have lived so long,
Dim London wrapped in smoke-cloud gray,
Whose roaring tumult, like a strong
Deep music, through my days hath rung.

II

Beneath the blue, upon the blue,
Like green leaves scattered by a god
In some old Bacchanal feast they lie :
How bright this laughing sea, and broad !
How deep this summer-shedding sky,
This daybreak making all things new !

III

Yet here, where peaceful Nature lies
In deep incalculable trance,
Wearied by her own ecstasy,
A human anguish doth advance,
The calm is broken by a sigh,
A living woe that wails and cries.

IV

Dead poet ! vast indeed thy skill !
The keen vibrations of thy speech
Infect this wholesome world with pain ;
Little thou hast to hope or teach,
Yet something holds us in thy strain,
Some force of suffering or of will.

V

A splendid fragment, incomplete,
Thy work stands for the critic's scorn.
What matters it ? At least we say
This spirit like our own was torn
By doubt, and anguish, and dismay,
Here a live human heart doth beat !

VI

Upon thy page we mark the stain,
Imperious scorn of gentler lives,
And ignorant anger wildly hurled.
Yet something of thee still survives ;
Once 'twas thy genius ruled the world,
To-day thy sceptre is thy pain.

VII

O strange and sad ! within the dawn
Of dreadful days we see thee stand ;
Thy song rolls past us like a storm

That darkens heaven and shakes the land,
And then, while yet we watch thy form
Move in the gloom,—it is withdrawn !

VIII

Wherever Nature is most fair
With flowers and sunlight thou didst come,
With slow feet moving wearily :
But nowhere was there rest or home,
Her calm thou couldst not take with thee,
But thou didst leave her thy despair.

IX

The shadow of thy love, thy hate,
Fell on each scene as falls a blight,
And mocked thy wild and casual choice ;
The olive-gardens, and the might
Of glaciated mountains heard thy voice,
Angry, forlorn, and passionate.

X

No hush fell on thee where the light
Of snow-capped peaks in solitude
Taught greater souls serenity.
Ah, vain his flight who flies from good !
Until man from himself can fly,
What ease comes to him in his flight ?

XI

The hungry sea, the shattered peak,
The avalanche and the hurricane,
Thou badst thy stormy woe declare.
Too well they served thee : now in vain
We hear and see : for everywhere
Not they, but thou in them dost speak.

XII

And in our times we hear again,
But mightier, clearer than of old,
The cry of rage that filled thy life ;
Loud on the spirit's ear is rolled
The clangour of an endless strife,
A people's anger and their pain.

XIII

And so to-day while leagues of wave
Flash on these sunny isles of Greece,
I seem to hear thy spirit wail,
I hear thee moving on the seas ;
I see thee dying, proud and pale,—
I see not Greece, but Byron's grave !

A RECOLLECTION OF OMAR

I AM as one who tarries at an Inn
Till wealth is spent and welcome is worn thin ;
Outside the door I hear the storm beat past,
And cling more closely to the warmth within.

Moreover at the door I know there wait
Two Shapes who hate me with a deadly hate,
Death, lean and vigilant, and with him Night,
And each I fear with cowardice consummate.

What have I done that I should go with these,
That this warm life in me should ebb and cease ?
That I should crave for goal of all my toil
This cold unconsciousness which fools call peace ?

Through ages long, hungry for life and bliss,
Tortured lest I my fated hour should miss,
I waited to be born. Ah God ! I ask
Was it worth waiting to be born for this ?

What gain have I in wasting so much breath,
To learn the clue of things above, beneath,
Art, science, scholarship,—if I be mocked
At last by this grim insolence of Death?

That was no wind that on the doorway beat,
It was no rattle on the panes of sleet ;
The Shapes grow angry and they shake the door,
And cry “ Come forth, O tired, reluctant feet ! ”

The wind drives through the crannies streaks of snow
The fire dies down, the candles flicker low,
The cup is empty and the board is bare,
I rise at last—and yet I dare not go.

I press my eyes against the window-pane,
And seem to see across the glimmering plain
The ghosts of men and women whom I knew
Glide wailing, and afraid I turn again.

Life, thin and bent, with lowered eyelids stands
Beside the failing hearth and spreads his hands,
And cries, “ O fool, why stay when joy hath gone?
Follow and find her in some other lands ! ”

But I reply, “ Who knows where she hath fled?
Doth Joy wear cere-clothes bound about her head?
Can Joy’s bright wings be folded in the grave?
And doth Joy live among the joyless dead ? ”

Then Life cries scornful, "Cease vain argument !
Thy purse is empty and thine all is spent ;
The hour is late : no more contend or strive,
Learn courage if thou canst not learn content !"

Life rises up with brow of angry gloom,
Puts out the last light in the desolate room,
Stamps down the fire, and opening wide the door,
Leaves me alone to grapple with my doom.

HUMAN CONTRADICTIONS

Not in the deepest midnight hides,
 The sorest foe ;
On brightest days the saddest tides
Moan round the soul, and upward slides,
With black-apparelled head, the ghost
 Of buried woe.

For when the birds are full of song,
 And spring-winds blow,
We hear the moaning martyr-throng,
And cry with them, " O Lord, how long ? "
The whole world shudd'ring in the gloom
 Of our own woe.

Within the crowded streets we see
 Our sins of youth ;
Our pale ideals pass silently,
And look on us, and seem to sigh,
" How vast the change, O souls that have
 Betrayed the truth ! "

And in the summer woods we meet
Our loved and dead ;
They follow us with soundless feet,
And warm leaf-chequered glories beat
On each faint form, and waver round
Each uplift head.

And we remember then and there
The last farewell ;
We see no sunshine broad and fair,
We hear upon the hushed warm air
No murmuring leaves, no mirth of birds,
We hear the knell !

Forlorn hearts beat in the breath
Of kindling spring,
Than in earth's dreariest time of death ;
More gloomy is the cypress wreath
When buds are fresh, and we most weep
When others sing.

But in long nights of pain our eyes
See holiest things ;
The great world with its clamourous cries
Spins far away, and we despise
Its narrow strifes in that great hush
The darkness brings.

In restless nights God's heaven is near,
And we discern
Thro' quickened senses how the clear
Sky shows His wisdom, sphere on sphere
And how far round earth's silent camp
God's watchfires burn.

And all our meagre misery
Is shamed and dumb ;
We hear the world's great travail-cry,
And see, as one who stands on high,
Above the blinding battle-smoke
God's Kingdom come !

SALUTAMUS MORITURI!

I

At last the hour when empty fall
The hands that held bright gold, or wine of love,
That in the foremost battle eager strove,
Or parried blows, or snatched the prize from all,
At last they fall !

II

One voice when all the tumult dies
Asks, Hast thou plea to live ? Alas, there's none !
We, vanquished, hasten only to be gone,
We, wearied, ask alone to close our eyes :
He sleeps who dies !

III

Alas, 'tis but the common doom.
We stay too late ; the feast of life was sweet,
But eager generations thrust our feet
Aside, and we are weak ; we give them room,
And bow to doom.

IV

For young desire hath died, and even despair
Hath sobbed its lonely anguish into sleep.
We are too sick to strive, too dull to weep ;
O let us die ! We have no other prayer,
 We who despair !

V

If thou art merciful, O death, be quick,
For surely nothing worse than life can come.
The whole great world turns down the fatal thumb ;
None love or bid us live ! Our heart is sick,
 O death, be quick !

VI

Did we not always know, O brooding heart,
This world for hands that strive and fail no place ?
The game's chance goes against us ; but with face
All unafraid, and firm, let us depart,
 O heavy heart !

VII

Sad change is this, and great ; O shame, my soul !
That thou who didst love Life, and from her lips
Drank love, art fallen so low in dim eclipse,
Thou wilt kiss Death, whose face and mouth are foul,
 O sad, my soul !

VIII

Yet even so. The long-vexed, brooding heart
At last, when Hope hath nothing more to spend,
Is thankful this vain life itself hath end.
The play is over ! When the guests depart,
O break, my heart !

TO A DESOLATE FRIEND

O FRIEND, like some cold wind to-day
Your message came, and chilled the light ;
Your house so dark, and mine so bright,—
I could not weep, I could not pray !

My wife and I had kissed at morn,
My children's lips were full of song ;
O friend, it seemed such cruel wrong,
My life so full, and yours forlorn !

We slept last night clasped hand in hand,
Secure and calm—and never knew
How fared the lonely hours with you,
What time those dying lips you fanned.

We dreamed of love, and did not see
The shadow pass across our dream ;
We heard the murmur of a stream,
Not death's, for it ran bright and free.

And in the dark her gentle soul
Passed out, but oh ! we knew it not !
My babe slept fast within her cot,
While yours woke to the slow bell's toll.

She paused a moment,—who can tell?—
Before our windows, but we lay
So deep in sleep she went away,
And only smiled a sad farewell!

It would be like her ; well we know
How oft she waked while others slept—
She never woke us when she wept,
It would be like her thus to go !

Ah, friend ! you let her stray too far
Within the shadow-haunted wood,
Where deep thoughts never understood
Breathe on us, and like anguish are.

One day within that gloom there shone
A heavenly dawn, and with wide eyes
She saw God's city crown the skies,
Since when she hasted to be gone.

Too much you yielded to her grace ;
Renouncing self, she thus became
An angel with a human name,
And angels coveted her face.

Earth's door you set so wide, alack
She saw God's gardens, and she went
A moment forth to look ; she meant
No wrong, but O ! she came not back !

Dear friend, what can I say or sing,
But this, that she is happy there ?
We will not grudge those gardens fair
Where her light feet are wandering.

The child at play is ignorant
Of tedious hours; the years for you
To her are moments : and you too
Will join her ere she feels your want.

The path she wends we cannot track :
And yet some instinct makes us know
Hers is the joy, and ours the woe,—
We dare not wish her to come back !

DE PROFUNDIS

So long against the foe to stand,
To set the eager face like steel,
To bear the fire on every hand
And still stand firm where others reel ;
Now who is fool, and who is wise ?
And what is truth ? And who shall show
The good we sought with such strained eyes ?
The fight is over ; let us go.

So long around our heart we drew
The flaming line of hope that kept
Despair at bay, and held it true
That Christ watched while the great world slept.
And now our creed breaks like a star,
And falls in fire, and ends in night ;
The heaven we sought is all too far,
Our hearts are tired, we have no light.

We drew the sword, we struck at wrong,
We fought to mould a better world ;
Now all we held as right so long
Lies at our feet in ruin hurled.

We learn the bitter speech of scorn,
 “ Their wrong was right, our right was wrong
We tear the flag in conquest borne,
 And bow our necks beneath the strong.

Yet not so ; if a splendid dream
We served, we will not perish thus.
Some Easter-glory yet may gleam
Beyond “ *God has forsaken us !* ”
Gird on the sword, the flag raise high !
 Once more against the spears of hell
We hurl ourselves, and if we die
 We fall as all God’s worthiest fell !

THE VAIN REGRET

I

I HEAR to-day that thou art dead,
Dead these long years !
The earth lies heavy on thy head,
Upon the mouth that breathed between
Voluptuous lips a life so keen,
The tender flesh, the clinging hands,
The thick hair, coiled in shining bands.
—All gone—it seems not possible !
And ended, too, the love and tears,
The tears that all too often fell ;
I hear to-day that thou art dead,
And amply I am punishèd.

II

No word, no sign you ever gave
Through all those years,
However much the heart might crave
Some answer how it fared with me !
Between us rolled a sullen sea,

Which broader grew as life grew less—
Too broad for whispered messages,
And which we were too proud to cross.
To-day I hear, and not with tears,
That thou art dead ! O this is loss,
That I have scorned whom I could save .
And blamed thee lying in thy grave !

III

Beside this gray dividing sea,
Through all these years,
My thoughts have wandered fitfully.
I wondered where you were, and what
The space and limit of your lot ;
I wondered why you gave no sign,
And anger filled my heart like wine,
And moved me with a vain remorse.
And now I know—too late for tears—
I fought with one who had no force.
I called thee proud, who far from me
Wert clothed in death's humility.

IV

What hour thy spirit passed away,
In these lost years,
I fain would know, if know I may.
When was it ? Was it day or night ?
Perhaps that hour my mood was light,

I danced or jested. Let me know,
That some vain sacrament of woe
My spirit yet may share with thee,
For whom my eyes refused the tears.
Yet no—unknown it still shall be,
That I may learn to mourn and pray
Through every hour of every day!

LAST WORDS

WHEN the gray light thickens, when the wind is still,
When the town is sleeping underneath the hill,
I shall feel a movement like another will
Draw me, wake me, hold me ; and shall rise and go
Weeping through the shadows to thy resting place.
Wilt thou stir to meet me, wilt thou thrill and know ?
Will the wind's breath be thy kiss upon my face ?
Will thy mouth stir smiling in the dark below ?

*I shall neither hear nor know,
There is neither love nor laughter here below.*

But I shall stoop and listen, with my ear set close,
I shall speak the dear name not another knows,
I shall whisper softly our old marriage vows,
And the rose-roots, and the violets, with their fibres deep
Then will stir vibrating like a wire the wind plays on,
And the music surely then will flutter through your sleep,
And the lids will slowly lift with weight of sorrow gone,
From your dim eyes that brighten toward my dim eyes that
weep !

*I shall neither smile nor weep,
There is neither sound nor smiling in that sleep.*

But I will bring the children, I will bid them sing,
Like small angels shadowed by the darkness of death's
wing,
Like sweet music softened by some deeper wondering.
They will stand above thee at the ebb of day,
I will sob the words, and they will sing the hymn !
Those thin voices rising will flood the stars they say ;
Will they not sink downward to thy prison dim,
Wilt thou know not then, that Willy sings, and May ?

*I shall hear not what they say,
No music pierces here, nor love, nor light of day.*

Then will I cast me down above thy buried head,
I will let my heart break, and not be comforted,
I will weep the night out, and day shall find me dead !
Wilt thou not feel my tears fall on thy frozen brow ?
Wilt thou not feel my heart break through all barriers ?
Wilt thou not feel my breathing warm thy house below ?
Wilt thou not stir and ponder " This sweet touch is hers ?"
When I lie dead above thee, then wilt thou not know ?

*Perchance I then shall know
When thy brow touches mine in the dark below !*

FANCIES FOR CELIA

I. THE SILENCE

WHEN the lamp's lit on winter nights,
And you above your task are bent,
I love to dream of old delights,
And watch you with a grave content.

No sound runs through the room, unless
The crackle of the fire, the sweet
Uncertain rustle of your dress,
The echo of the rainy street.

'Tis then I dream of what you are,
And might have been, or might have done :
A thousand memories, near and far,
Your face stirs in me, dearest one !

We seldom talk on such a night,
We are so conscious each of each,
That we dare not disturb delight
With wanton sacrilege of speech.

II. A DREAM OF DUTY

A SOBER thought is mine to-night ;
I have a vision quick and bright
Of what thy spirit is, a gleam
Sufficient to light up my dream.
For in the round of toil and bliss
The calm, habitual glance or kiss,
The genuine soul which dwells apart,
And moves the mind or prompts the heart,
We seldom see ; 'tis only thus
At intervals it shines on us.

Put then the test of this old scene,
Dream of the tragic might-have-been.

You are a Christian in the time
When earth's fair tree of faith was young,
Before its branches, smeared with grime,
A world of mockers overhung.

Your thoughts brood on a heavenly home,
You are the Heaven's mystic bride :
You walk the streets of ancient Rome,
And dream of Him—the Crucified

You love me too, and yet it is
Love in such delicate control,
It seems to yield intenser bliss :
You love as soul may love a soul.

Its limitations are a power
That makes the sum of love no less,
Its reticence is as a flower
That daily yields new fragrances.

At last the tragic hour arrives,
Wilt thou be faithful to thy soul,
And live the only life that lives,
Or that which mortals call the whole ?

A little grain of incense flung
Upon the threat'ning fires of Jove ;
So small a thing, and thou so young,
So small a price for life and love !

I see thee stand, in nowise shamed,
Nor trembling, nor disconsolate.
How wilt thou answer ? Art thou framed
To grapple with so dire a fate ?

I think I know what thou wilt say :
Thine ears are full of some sweet psalm,
Thou smilest, and I turn away
Broken before thy dreadful calm.

For no light earthly thing art thou,
Nor could I love thy beauty thus ;
Thou hast a sovereign space of brow,
And eyes less keen than serious.

In thee, behind all smiles and mirth,
There lurks in being's inmost cell
A Power, a something not of earth,
Steadfast, serene, unconquerable.

Thou recognisest life and death,
Thou movest in thy right of Will,
Subdued by love, yet with free breath,
Obeying higher promptings still.

This is the Power I cannot touch,
Which flashes on me unsubdued ;
Nor should I love thee half so much,
Nor love so deeply, if I could.

That thou art mine is partly true,
With me thou art content to dwell ;
A closer vision tells me, too,
That thou art wholly God's as well !

III. A RIVER DREAM

As I float, as I float,
My life dissolves in dreams :
A Shape of Air is my boat
And the Milky Way my river,
 Flowing on, on for ever,
To the music of my dreams,
 As I float.

Through all sorts of happy weather
We go floating on together,
Venus you—shall I be Mars ?
But instead of elms and larches,
Gardens full of earthly roses,
Lilies with their pale repose,
Willows stooped o'er verdant closes,
Poplars straight, like prison-bars,
Drawn across the sky's blue arches,
 Over us the heaven marches
 And the army of the stars.

We have floated past Orion,
Past the Scorpion and the Lion,
Past the clustered Pleiades,
 And the little crescent moon !
O waken, dear, and listen !
 There is music on the breeze,
And the star-shores nearer glisten
 In the golden afternoon.

I wonder what the year is,
Why the heart no longer wearies,
How long is it since we started,
Dull with work and heavy-hearted :
Do you think that we have come
 To our home ?
Have we floated quite away
 From the earth and its care ?
Have we, in this noon of May,
 Come on Heaven unaware ?

IV. IDEAL MEMORY

If in the years that come such thing should be
That we should part, with tears or deadly strife,
That we should cease to share a common life,
Or walk estranged in voiceless misery,
Then by this night of love remember me.

For tired hearts at last an end shall be,
For tired feet the pit-fall grave doth wait :
Can we escape this common trick of fate ?
More fortunate than all beside are we ?
Wherefore by this night's love remember me.

Not by my worst, when dull or bitterly
The mind moved, and the evil in my blood

Worked words of anger thy meek will withstood,
Not by the hours I sinned 'gainst love and thee,
O not by these, dear love, remember me.

First in our mind live things that perfect be,
All shapes of joy or beauty,—day's low light
Dying along the seaward edge of night,
The first sweet violet, music's ecstasy,
Making the heart leap,—so remember me.

For I would have thy mind and memory
A chamber of sweet sounds and fragrances.
Let the ill pass : its power to hurt was less
Than joy's to bless us. I remember thee
By thy first kiss ; O thus remember me !

There was an hour wherein a god's degree
And stature seemed to clothe me, and I stood
Supremely strong, and high, and great, and good :
O by that hour, when all I aimed to be
I did appear, by that remember me !

V. LOVE AND TIME

To others thou appear'st I know not how,—
Like flowers faded, which bloom not again ;
Like skies from which has ebb'd the morning-glow,
Like music whereof men no more are fain.
What matters it ? If such defects there be,
'These are the flaws which true love cannot see ;
Thou art the same to me.

To others it may be thy mind is dull,
Thy thought a stream that ripples in the shade ;
But I have heard the stream when it was full,
And still I hear the music that it made.
I would not that the world should follow thee,
I am sole audience of thy melody ;
Thou art the same to me.

To others thou art one amongst a crowd,
A hieroglyphic face they cannot read ;
For me thine inmost self stands disavowed,
Thou art God's answer to my deepest need.
I find in thee a joy, a sober glee,
Which like a charm works on me silently ;
Thou art the same to me.

How many years since all my blood was thrilled
By those dear touches of thy tender hands
I cannot count ; my life was then fulfilled,
And at that hour the clock of Time still stands.
I see thee as I saw thee then, when we
First kissed beneath the conscious linden tree ;
Thou art the same to me.

I know not whether Time hath marred thy face,
Or if thy charm be still unvexed and whole ;
I see in thee thy true interior grace,
I love thee as Soul loves a living Soul.
Let Time do what he will ; it cannot be
That he shall wither this best part of thee ;
Thou art the same to me.

VI. GROWING OLD TOGETHER

OF all good wishes that I have,
The best my heart can fashion
Is age that carries to the grave
A heart still young in passion.
The wish that you and I may go
Through all the world's wild weather
Unparted, and that we may grow,
God willing, old together.

The lindens by the garden gate
Were young when I was younger,
Their branches had begun to mate
When I turned ballad-monger ;
To-day their branches interlace
And mock the wind and weather,
Each summer brings them added grace
As they grow old together.

The trusty settles by the fire
Were fashioned by my father ;
With pride he often would admire
Their newness ; I the rather

Observe the gracious stain of years ;
The grain, like grain in leather,
More beautiful and plain appears
As they grow old together.

The sickle that my father plied
Hangs yonder in the ceiling,
His fowling piece hangs by its side
To memory mute appealing ;
No longer common steel they seem,
As when he trod the heather,
They change to silver, while they dream
Of growing old together.

The sickle glancing toward the gun
Is whispering like a lover—
“ Your surface flashes like the sun
When clouds have all blown over.
You were not half so bright and gay
When, in forgotten weather,
The same hand handled us all day
When we were young together ! ”

The gun with scintillations bright
Replies : “ Your form is finer,
You quiver with a purer light
Than when you were a minor.

Thin and bent double like the moon
Seen in clear harvest weather,
Most lovely then,—so you'll be soon
The moon's peer altogether !”

The lindens too last June I heard
Discoursing in like fashion,
While in their boughs the lover's bird
Poured out his song of passion.
Said they : “ Our leaves should closer move,
Like feather laid on feather
Upon this pilgrim bird of love,
As we grow old together.

“ For years we've trembled each toward each,
For years have loved each other :
Where once we just could touch and reach
We now clasp one another.
And soon the falling year will bring
The wild wan autumn weather ;
O closer, closer let us cling
As we grow old together ! ”

Thus may my heart in gladness move
To love's great consummation,
Be rich in hope and rich in love
And in love's revelation.

Sweetheart, when summers from us slip
And leave life's autumn weather,
We'll share diviner fellowship
As we grow old together.

VII. A CHILD'S DREAM

THE child looked upward from her play
And stopped, with air beguiling :
" I was in heaven yesterday,"
She said : " Why are you smiling ? "

She's three years old : a tiny elf,
With blue eyes and mysterious,
Already she explores herself,
And life is getting serious.

" You were in heaven ? What did you see ?
The little face smiled purely,
" I saw God busy making me,
And angels watched Him, surely.

" I saw Him make my hands and feet,
And just as I was going,
Who should I see but Jesus sweet,
And He was busy sewing ! "

“But what did Jesus sew? You see
That part I can’t unravel.”

“O, He was making clothes for me,
In which I was to travel!”

“When all was done”—her laugh broke low—
“And angels all were praying,
Why then I ran away you know,
And now I’m down here playing!”

Dear child, I know thy speech was true,
For in those eyes beguiling
I saw just then heaven’s light break through,
And in their depths God smiling!

I scarce dare touch thee, lest I spoil
This fruit for heaven’s vintage;
I shrink from thee, lest I should soil
This new gold of God’s mintage.

I look at thee, and O the pain,
I see the days before thee!
How oft God’s coin comes back again
Defaced and dulled in glory!

God hold thee, darling, in His hands,
And grant thee usage tender!
An angel now behind thee stands,
And says, “I will defend her!”

The garden-gate of heaven stands wide,
Young angels cry, " We've missed her !"
Some day, no doubt, they'll leave God's side,
And seek their truant sister.

Till then we keep thee ; but, sweet child,
Love's guerdon and repayment,
We know who made thy spirit mild,
And what hands wove thy raiment.

And He thou sawest yesternight
Is still in toil right earnest,
To make thee raiment pure and bright
To wear when thou returnest.

VIII. THE LITTLE BOY'S PROGRAMME

I AM so very young and small,
That when big people pass me by,
I sometimes think they are so high
I'll never grow a man at all.

And yet I want to be a man
Because so much I want to do,
I want to buy fine things for you,
And be a soldier if I can.

When I'm a man I will not let
Poor little children starve, or be
Ill-used, or stand to beg of me,
With naked feet out in the wet.

But I shall think of some fine plan
To give them all new clothes and food,
And everybody will be good
And happy when I am a man.

And lovely gardens I shall plant
With flowers and fountains everywhere,
And I shall bring sick children there
And give them everything they want.

Or what is better, if I can
Find out where Jesus lives, I shall
Tell Him to come and heal them all :
All this will be when I'm a man !

Now don't you laugh !—The father kissed
The little serious mouth, and said,
“ You've almost made me cry instead,
You blessed little optimist ! ”

IX. OTHER AND ONE

SOMEWHERE in other worlds we met,
And we shall meet again,
One earlier freed, one longer held
In the grim hands of pain.

Somewhere the One shall watch the stream
Of spirits rushing by,
Until some signal through the dark
Proclaims the Other nigh.

“And is it Thou?” The folded arm
Drops from the hidden brow,
The shadowy raiment stirs, the lips
Sigh back, “And is it Thou?”

Somewhere, sometime, we thus shall meet,
Somewhere beyond the Sun :
Nor can we guess who later comes,
The Other or the One.

X. THE ANGEL AT THE FORD

I SOUGHT to hold her, but within her eyes
I read a new strange meaning ; faint they prayed,
“O let me pass and taste the great surprise
Behold me, not reluctant nor afraid !”

“Nay, I will strive with God for this!” I cried
“As man with man, like Jacob at the brook,
Only be thou, dear heart, upon my side!”
“Be still” she answered, “very still, and look!

And straightway I discerned with inward dread
The multitudinous passing of white souls,
Who paused, each one with sad averted head,
And flashing of indignant aureoles.

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

LIKE the waves of a dreary sea,
Multitudinous, black, devouring,
The hours of the night encompass me,
All thought and will o'er-powering.

Steep rises each awful slope,
A mountainous wall impending,
Each treacherous wave I climb without hope
In a torture of toil unending.

And the waves are full of eyes,
Dull, piteous, mocking, scowling :
Dead faces written with lust and lies,
Mad lips profanely howling.

And ever a drowning girl
Glides past me, help imploring,
Till her hair is caught in a maelstrom whirl,
And her voice stilled in its roaring.

Thro' the sounding wells of the sea,
Sucked down, in stifling spasms,
Her face for ever accompanies me,
And follows thro' glassy chasms.

Aloft on the foaming ridge,
Deaf with the ocean's thunder,
I spin in the surge like a drowning midge
And then sink league-deep under.

Then sudden as thought the whole
Vast sea with blood is reddened,
I am shamed and stained to my very soul,
And each live pulse is deadened.

I am lost, and know I am lost;
Impassive, numb, unhearing,
Like a weed of the sea I am beaten and tossed,
Too weak for strife or fearing.

Then the sea rolls back at last,
And I sigh between dreams and waking,
Thank God, the terror of night is past,
And the dear fresh dawn is breaking!

HISTORY

WHEN first they met there was no speech
Could say what each would be to each ;
It was the budding time of May,
When Love and Youth made holiday.

When they had lived a year together
There came a time of cloudy weather,
When Love grew weak and hollow-eyed,
Grew frail and slight—then slowly died.

No woman fails to hold a man
If she can but adjust her plan,
And touch the chords of every day
With that first tenderness of May.

But she grew callous by degrees
And cared no more to win or please,
Or he to ask what she denied,
And so they lived on side by side.

At last he died, and then she knew
That true love endlessly is true ;
Her heart unlocked its gate once more
When no one knocked against the door.

For all the sky was cold and gray,
It was no more the time of May,
It was the grim month of December,
When life's sole work is to—remember.

HAUNTED

THE towers rise stark against the sky,
The tarn lies black below the towers ;
Like trembling witnesses close by
Three poplars shiver in the mist and showers.
And it is a haunted place,
In each window a dreary face,
A whisper in every room,
And over the house a doom.

The terraces are green with slime,
The fish are dead, the pond is dry,
The trees have rotted in their prime,
And voices are heard to moan and sigh ;
For a ghost is in every room,
Whose fingers amid the gloom
Cast the shuttles of love and hate,
And spin the web of a fate.

The tarn lies black below the tower,
'Twas there his body splashed and sank ;
A cry rang through the mist and shower,
And a woman wailed upon the bank.

And a hoof rang over the hill,
The murderer fled, and all was still ;
Small cause had he to wave his sword,
He was drowned that night at the ford.

The towers rise black against the sky,
The windows yawn, the turrets fall,
The birds drop if too near they fly,
And a ghost is stooping in the hall ;
But he cannot cleanse the stain,
And he cannot heal his pain,
For a voice is in every room,
And over the house a doom.

WIND SONGS

I. MORNING WIND

THERE'S a Wind of the Morn I love ;
When the silver of dawn is bright,
And the stars faint out above,
It comes, like a sleeper's sigh,
The breath of the Day and the Night
Who kiss as they say good-bye.

And the leaves thrill over my head,
And the clouds grow bright with hope,
For the terror of night is dead ;
O joy, I am free at last,
I have climbed the haunted slope
Of the Hours, and the night is past !

II. AUTUMN WIND

THE sky is gray like a vault of stone,
The wind of trouble is blowing :
Under the eaves I hear it moan,
Yesterday I said summer was going,
Now I know it is gone.

A troubled wind and a troubled mind
The one to the other crying !
I had rather the thunder with flame behind
Than this drear day with its sighing, sighing,
For something it cannot find.

Gray and desolate, hard and drear,
And the wind of trouble is blowing !
The whole Earth bows to a phantom fear,
And tiptoe Summer, as she is going,
Cries curses in her ear.

III. WIND AT SEA

A WIND blew over the sea,
And the clouds like banners that hung
Becalmed to a mast, all suddenly
Flung out their folds, and the surges sung,
And the world rolled merrily.

And faster the great wind blew
Till the ship ran a furious race,
And swifter the wild seamew
Plunged eastward in eager chase,
And the sun sank down in hue
All fiery, and all men knew
The night would be evil at sea.

And all the wild night through
The great wind shattered and roared,
And swept down the steep sea-board,
Like a reaper who reaps for death :
And it died with the break of day,
Leaping further inland,
And leaving but eddies of breath.

But there on the trampled sand,
Mid spume and sea-weed and spray,
The corpses lay many and chill :
Yet the day rose fair and still.

AFTER RAIN

O WAKE and behold and rejoice
For at last after many days
A mighty wind gives voice,
And utters God's power and His praise !
O see what a sky there is,
Fathomless, infinite, blue,
From whose zenith there falls the bliss
Of the lark : and all looks new,
Rain-washed, pellucid, refresht ;
And the air quivers through and through
With the sense of life, and the zest
Of joy, and of power, and of hope.
Not a cloud ! From base to cope
Clear-hewn is the sapphire wall ;
Not a sound ; but along the slope
Of the wood the cuckoo's call,
And the laughter of children at play,
For the world keeps holiday !
God wakens and works anew,
And we see the light of His track
As He vanishes out of view,
And smiles for a moment back !
O Love ! rejoice, for at last
The wind's great trumpets are blown,
The rain is over and past,
God visits again His own.

A SONG OF REBUKE

FULL blithely o'er the lea he sped,
O the sun was shining !
He knew not that his love lay dead,
Lily-white hands on a lily-white bed,
O the sun was shining !

A mavis sung in the alder tree,
All the birds were singing !
Not one made wail, for none could see
The shadow of human misery :
O the birds were singing !

A summer wind blew down the glade,
Free the wind was blowing !
It blew thro' sunshine and thro' shade,
But never a single moan it made :
O the wind was blowing !

And wind and bird and sunlight said,
"O happy day that's breaking !"
None whispered that his love lay dead
Lily-white hands on a lily-white bed,
Asleep beyond all waking !

LIFE AND REGRET

I HAD a curious dream last night :
Around me rose the hills of sleep,
Like clouds, along whose summits steep
The stumbling moon spills waning light,
In the hushed middle of the night.

The mystic hills of sleep I saw,
And where their ridge rose bent and clear,
I saw a troubled light appear,
And flash, and wander, and withdraw,
I know not what it was I saw.

And then, upon these hills of sleep,
I saw a little naked child
Run with a lamp in searchings wild
For something lost : and he did weep,
And wake me from my pleasant sleep.

Regret the child—who runs behind
The steps of Life, in search alway
Of that which Life has cast away,
Of that which none can ever find,
Wail as they will, and pant behind.

BUDDHISM

TEN thousand years, bound on the wheel of life,
Ten thousand thousand, whirled thro' endless light,
Thro' gulfs of gloom, and ever-barren strife ;
Like the wind homeless, like the sea made bright
With suns that flash and darken,—like the wave
Lifted and sunken : like the foam-bell tossed
Upon the roaring surge that is its grave,
A moment gleaming, shattered then and lost
Only to reappear—even so am I !
The vast wheel spins : now on its outer edge,
Now on its inner circle, low or high,
I hasten onward, and like wind-swept sedge
I see the world' stooped in Fate's hurricane.
I shall not rest until the sea be dry,
Until the wheel falls broken into dust
Before His feet who is the Great and Just,
Until the world ends and begins again :
To hope, to pray, or to complain is vain.

MYSTERY AND EGOISM

INFINITE distance, depth, and height
Surround me !
Infinite darkness, shadow, and light
Astound me !
Like a woven web the universe
Spreads out before me,
Trembling to every movement slight
Which passes o'er me.
God is awakened if I speak,
And listens :
The last star feels the sound-wave break
And glistens.
In God's ear my small whisper weak
Echoes like thunder :
And thus stand I, and with my hand
Touch worlds above and under,
I myself in wonder stand
In a universe of wonder.

MAN'S FAMILIAR

THRO' the wide ways of an unboundaried Hell
Two Shapes move ever, stride for stride,
Each naked, shuddering, restless, hollow-eyed,
Each loathing each with hate unutterable,
Thro' the ways waste and wide.

One is a Man, the other bloody-hued
His Conscience ; and since Hell began,
These two are here : and behold neither can
Shake off the other, following and pursued,
The Conscience and the Man.

THE UNSUNG SONG

I HAVE had many a vision,
Freedom and great delight,
Thought in full vigour and flight ;
Yet, at last, a wall dense as night
Has met me, and thrust me back,
My joy has felt its own lack,
And the world but a prison.

Silent I sit and ponder,
Is the sky high enough for the lark ?
Does thought ever find its mark ?
Is there light without limit of dark ?
Is there song that was ever fulfilled,
Or desire that was wholly stilled ?
I weary and wonder.

O flesh, thou burden and fetter,
Songs I have made that I keep,
Sweeter than love or sleep ;
But another there is more deep,
That I never can bind in my sheaf ;
It aches in my heart like a grief,
And is sweeter and better.

ART AND GOD

As slowly dawns on dying eyes
A great light thro' the gates of death,
And lo ! the sudden face of Faith
Shines like a splendour in dark skies :

So they, who in the awful quest
Thro' Life's dim woods, with feet that tire
Grove on, led by the flying fire
Of Art, the world's great stranger-guest :

At last, when all the morning smites
Far down the wastes of tangled brake,
And high in half-dark skies awake
The lark's notes, faint thro' fluttering lights :

Perchance in Death's great dawn of bliss
Art's long-averted face shall turn
Its star-like calm on these who yearn,
And what was Art Jehovah is.

ASPIRATION

THERE'S a pain in the search for the high,
There's an ache in the heart of the bird
Who seeks the top reach of the sky,
By defeat undeterred.
Is it better to fail on the way
To the highest, or live in the dust
With the reptile whose one holiday
Is sunshine and lust?

There's a thirst in the heart of the tree
When it lifts bridal arms to the Spring,
And covets to wear in its glee
The sun's self for ring.
Is it better in vain to aspire
For the thing that never can be,
Or grovel with hemlock and briar
That feel not nor see?

What matter that such things are not?
That we follow the glance and the gleam
Of a dream that no ending has got?
Still, I say, let me dream.

I will dream of the nightingale's song,
All the lyrical passion and rush,
And at last, when my yearning is strong,
I may sing like the thrush.

I will search for what never was found,
For the height and the light and the glow
Of impossible things I am bound,
For glory comes so.
If I miss them, at least there's a bliss
Which within me is silently wrought :
I am better and nobler by this,
O Soul, that I sought !

LATE PRAISE

I STOOD within the market-place of life
And sung, and power was with me in my song.
I strove for praise, for praise seemed worth my strife,
I strove for love, for love in me was strong.
None listened or regarded, so at last
The music broke within my brain ;
I turned from men, and into silence pass't,
Silence, forgetfulness, and pain.

But something lived within that early song,
And from afar men found the echoes sweet.
To-day they call me, but no longer strong
Nor young I come with slow and halting feet.
Years of dispraise have dulled what power I had ;
My song is now an instrument
Long thrust aside disused, and I am sad
And old, with hope and vigour spent.

Men praise me now : but praise has come too late.
They throng me,—but my solitude seems best.
Too late the sun has pierced the clouds of fate,
I shiver, and am old, and cry for rest.
When I deserved reward men stood aloof,
Against my best scorn's lip was curled :
To-day my meanest wins me no reproof :
Alas, poor fame ! Poor song ! Poor world !

IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Once I said,

*O kindly friends, have care when I am dead
To bury me where softest dews are shed
On silent pastures, far from human feet,
That my last sleep may be serene and sweet.
Let meek familiar flowers grow at my head,
And herbs and grasses where with flocks are fed ;
And, if I dream, let far-off bubbling streams
And whispering leaves be woven in my dreams,
For thus I shall be calmed and comforted*

When I am dead !

But to-day

*Another and more common boon I pray ;
Let me be buried in this City gray,
Beneath the pavements of the noisiest street,
Most thronged by labour's tired processional feet,
And all the vast gigantic disarray
Of roaring wheels and men in endless fray.
Let me still feel the earth's undying pain,
And let my bones be jarred by action's strain,
I, who inactive, share tho' far away*

Man's strenuous day !

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